CULTURAL PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

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RISHIKESHAB RAJ REGMI

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Presented to Shree M. K. Upadhyaya with respect

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Rishikeshab Raj Regmi

2043/9/7

Cultural Patterns And Economic Change

(Anthropological Study of Dhimals of Nepal)

Dr. Rishikeshab Raj Regmi

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To my mother Sridhara Regmi

'New things are made familiar
and familiar things are made new'.

—SAMUELL JOHNSON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The filedwork on which this monograph is based was done during a period of eight months spent in the community of Dhimal, in the Damak Panchayat, Jhapa district of Eastern Nepal in 1981. By this time Damak has been upgraded as Nagar Panchayat I lived with the Dhimal people following the tradition of social Anthropology having direct contact with the people. I had and have maintained contact with the Society of Dhimal through the years by regular visits since 1970 and in some cases formal research. It was only possible for me because I am an inhabitant of Nepal.

Society of Dhimal is still a traditional agricultural community and my findings still hold. The changes that have begun to appear, have gradually penetrating deeply enough to alter its fundamental social structure and traits though they still persue explicitly the religious practices and festivals.

It has been stated that materials that I have used are exclusively derived from my filedwork, although some use and reappraisal has been made of written sources whereever it was found. There is lack of authentic literature dealing with the communities in the whole of Jhapa district of Eastern Nepal. Particularly Dhimal community lacks such documents and materials.

My debt to many people is eternal and cannot be paid in full. In the first place, the co-operation, hospitability and sociability of Dhimal people, all made my study easier and more human. They taught me a style and value of life, a vanishing one, probably, but one in which human beings and qualities are recognized as such,

I received the help from following offices : (i) The Jhapa district land reform office, (ii) Land revenue and registration office and (iii) Damak Panchayat. I also received valuable help from teacher Mr. S. Lama, Mr. Rabindra Ghosh (Engineer) and Mr. Gamvir Jong Lawati (DADO). My special thanks are also to my wife Nirmala who managed everything from households and her campus teaching during my absence. She also helped me by awakening and providing profound inspiration to publish this monograph. My due thanks are also to Additional secretary, Mr. R. J. Thapa of Ministry of Education and culture, Director General Mr. P. N. Niraula, Department Archaeology, Kathmandu, Nepal and my friend Narayan Thapa, present First secretary, Embassy of Nepal, Paris, for their respecttive well wishes and help. To all, I owe my due thanks. Lastly my earnest and sincere thanks are to Prof P. K. Bhowmick Msc, Ph.d, Dsc, without whose direction and inspiration this monograph would not have been so fruitful.

Dr. Rishikeshab Raj Regmi

FOREWORD

Nepal can be traditionally divided into three geographical features. They are : (1) Himalayan region on the north, (2) Siwalik mountains, and the hills in the middle, and (3) plain **Tarai** region on the south, facing the border of U. P. and Bihar of India. The southernmost part, the **Tarai**, has been traditionally very sparsely populated because of a hot humid climate and the prevalence of a virulent type of malaria. Most of the parts of the **Tarai** consists of dense forests. In recent years, as a result of an effective malaria eradication programme, much of the forest has been cleared for cultivation. As a result of the increasing pressure of population in the mountains and other parts of neig:houring regions, the Tarai is becoming a densely populated agricultural belt.

The area of this study is situated in the district of Jhapa, one of the conscious political area of Eastern Nepal, bordering west Bengal on the east and Bihar on the south.

Damak is a multi-caste Panchayat in the Jhapa district where a very old agricultural community called 'Dhimal' inhabit since a long time past. They are supposed to be the first settlers of this Panchayat and are 2783 in number. This society was completely isolated from the rest of the country till 1970 when Mahendra (East-west) High Way was constructed, which connects western Nepal with Eastern Nepal near Naxalbari of West Bengal.

Since the beginning of the sixties, Nepal is witnessing a great deal of changes in the field of politics, education, economics and means of transport and communications. Because of these changes and development, the society at large has been showing significant interaction between the various ethnic groups, resulting in total and partial socio-cultural changes in all spheres of their life.

These aspects or changes in culture have not been well-studied by any native scholar, as yet.

Due to the opening of the new highway, many ethnic groups from the mountains of the north have migrated to Jhapa district, as also to this Panchayat. Thus Damak became the most mobile place and a centre for education, small industries and trade and commerce. The result has been a total social, cultural and political transformation of this agricultural community.

Every society has a value system, which helps to maintain its cultural consistency and continuity. The members of the society having their own cultural pattern react emotionally with their value system for maintaining stability of their culture. Traditions, institutions and values of a consistent cultural pattern have an inherent force which strives to maintain the socio-cultural identity of a particular group of people. Damak as the area of study was selected, because it is the biggest Panchayat of Jhapa district in Eastern Nepal, where the first Land Reforms Act was introduced by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. Here the Panchayat Land Revenue Act has also been introduced at first recently.

Moreover this is an area where we can clearly observe the fast socio-economic, ecological and cultural changes that are taking place. Because of these factors, the small and isolated Dhimal community are under constant pressure of other migrated people.

According to many social scientists, social systems possess a tendency to re-establish some form of balance when confronted with changes or pressures that are systematically disruptive. This homeostatsis has been variously termed as 'stationary equilibrium process (by Kurt Lewin), structural-functional equilibria (by Talcott Parsons), and steady state by (Gregory Bateson).

In this study an attempt has been made to determine how certain demographic, ecological and social changes are interacting against the traditional setting in Jhapa, and Dımak Panchayat in particular.

The most paramount importance is to see the patterns of social changes and the underlying process of economic development. The main questions or points that arise in this connection are :—

(1) To what extent do the traditional, social institutions of the Dhimal community are undergoing changes; (2) how far they have been able to retain their traditional culture in the prevailing changing conditions due to contact with different people in different situations; and (3) are the traditional social institutions really disintegrating or just adapting themselves to the changing values and social-organisational needs of modern time ?

The method or systematic developmental approach with a structural one has been adopted, by which relationships between the family systems and external ones could be established. Emphasis has been given to the relevance of economy and occupational variables and their influence on family structure and formation. This type of approach has been made among others, by British Anthropologists Fortes, Goody and Leach (1958).

The techniques of formal and informal interviews, group discussions, genealogy, observation, participant-observation, case-study have been used as tools for the purpose of this study. Schedules and questionnaire, available documents and other relevant statistics have been used in order to have a total picture of the Dimal society its economy, and development.

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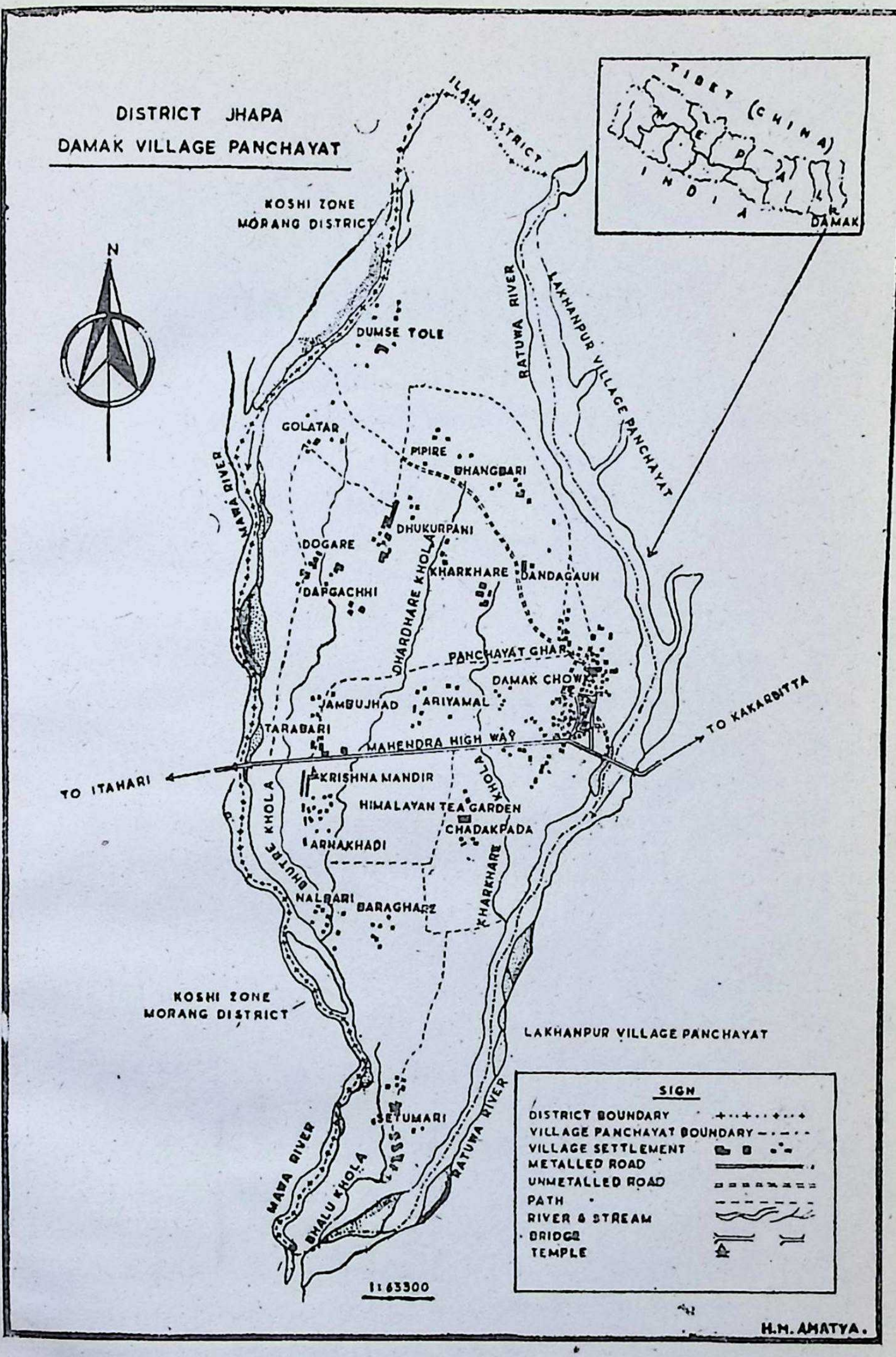

DISTRICT JHAPA
DAMAK VILLAGE PANCHAYAT
TIBET (CHINA)
NEPAL
INDIA
DAMAK
ILAM DISTRICT
KOSHI ZONE
MORANG DISTRICT
N
DUMSE TOLE
RATUWA RIVER
LAKHANPUR VILLAGE PANCHAYAT
MAWA RIVER
GOLATAR
PIPIRE
BHANGBARI
DHUKURPANI
DOGARE
KHARKHARE
DANDAGAUN
DARGACHHI
DHARDHARE KHOLA
PANCHAYAT GHAR
DAMAK CHOWK
JAMBUJHAD
ARIYAMAL
TARABARI
MAHENDRA HIGH WAY
TO KAKARBITTA
TO ITAHARI
KRISHNA MANDIR
HIMALAYAN TEA GARDEN
KHOLA
BHUTDE KHOLA
CHADAKPADA
ARNAKHADI
KHARKHARE
NALBARI
BARAGHARE
KOSHI ZONE
MORANG DISTRICT
LAKHANPUR VILLAGE PANCHAYAT
SETUMARI
MAWA RIVER
BHALU KHOLA
RATUWA RIVER
SIGN
DISTRICT BOUNDARY
VILLAGE PANCHAYAT BOUNDARY
VILLAGE SETTLEMENT
METALLED ROAD
UNMETALLED ROAD
PATH
RIVER & STREAM
BRIDGE
TEMPLE
1:63300
H.M. AMATYA.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Studies of village societies or rural families in Jhapa District of Nepal are almost non-existent, as yet. Free access to Nepal has been permitted to the outside world only from 1950's. In contrast to the hills of Nepal, the tarai (plain) region has received comparatively little attention of the Nepalese as well as of foreign anthropologists, probably being too hot, dusty and geographically unattractive, and as it was a notoriously malarious region until recently. Consequently, little is known about the socio-economic and cultural life of tarai communities to the outside world. The tarai region comprises 15 percent of Nepal's total land area, and yields about 31 percent of the nation's gross agricultural and domestic products. Seventysix percent of government revenue till 1975 was collected from this area.

Jhapa, the area selected for this study, is the biggest district of Nepal tarai, where land reforms in Nepel were first introduced in 1964 thereby bringing revolutionary changes in the land tenure system, as also in the life of the original inhabitants like the Dhimal, Meche, Kochs, Rajbanshi, Majhi, Satar, Tharu, etc., who live in this tarai.

A large number of hill people migrate regularly into the plains every year for want of land for cultivation in their own habitaions. Recently this trend has reached its peak. The opening of East-West Mahendra Highway has further brought about remarkable changes in the social, economic and political life of these population, due to frequent outside contact and gradual development of this area.

Jhapa has 44 Village Panchayats, of Which Damak is the largest and more densely populated and developed area. This is also the richest Panchayat, where considerable urbanisation and industrialisation are noticed. Gradual introduction of modorn technology, assoctiated with ceonomic deveelopment and political consciousness of the People have generated a process of change in the social and political institutions of the tribal societies living in this area. It is argued generally that as a result of migration, urbanisation and political changes, the self-sufficiency of the villages is slowly breaking up everywhere and traditional socioeconomic style began to erode. Castes and joint families are disintegrating, and the inter-caste or intercommunity relations are altering. In Nepal there is no such scheduling of the communities, as in India. Seheduled castes and scheduled tribes have constitutional beneficial in India. But in Nepal, all communities are treated as castes though they have hierachy and distinct social stratification. As a result, village or community unity is gradually fading away. These arguments, more or less, seem to be true, but the truth or otherwise of these arguments can be only ascertained after a fairly large number of intensive sociological and anthropogical studies of the various communities living in the tarai are made.

Some anthropologists have drawn attention to village studies made in this regard among the Nepali people. They have published various accounts of village life in Nepal, without covering the tarai villages in particular. So these studies depict only a partial picture of rural life of the people of Nepal. Further, these studies contain some accounts of agricultural, political, geographical and ethnographic aspects, leaving aside the socioeconomic and cultural matrix of the Nepalese rural life. By doing so, the authors have failed to assess the social dynamism and context, which is possible by way of analysing the whole web of inter-relationships socio-economic, political and cultural, which make up the village community into a single unit.

The present study about the Dhimals, an agricultural community of Eastern, Nepal relate to the above aspects. First information about the Dhimals was given by Brian Hodgson in 1880.[卐] Others who have attempted to study other facets of their social life and give their details are - D. B. Bista (1966), S. L. Shrestha (1968), R. R. Regmi (1971), D. R. Dahal (1973) and Rohit Nepali (1978). But none of them have covered and depicted the whole range of their social and cultural life in details, in a coherent scientific way. At present, the society of the Dhimals in the Damak Panchayat is in a stage of transition and it is a vital need to record their traditional culture and social network as a whole, as also the present transitional trends, before they are assimilated wholly in the mainstream of the Nepali people.

WHY THIS STUDY

This study is an attempt to throw light on some aspects intimately related to the structure of the Dhimal Society.

It tries to ascertain as to whether there is one pattern or more in the structure af their rural society and families and what are the relations and differences between these patterns and other factors like, occupations and social, economic, cultural and religious set-up. At the same time this aims to provide the background against which social changes in the Dhimal society that have occured, can be compared with others and studied in depth. It also attempts to ascertain.

(I) the traditional social institutions and to what extent the Dhimals are undergoing changes;

[卐] Hodgson, Brian : On the Koch Bode and Dhimal Tribe. Miscellaneous Essays relating to Indtan Subjects, vol. 2 sec. 1, part iii, 1880

(II) how far they have been able to retain their traditional culture in the prevailing changing conditions due to contact with different outside people in different situations; and

(III) whether their traditional institutions are really disintegrating, or they are just adapting themselves to the changing social, economic and organisational needs of modern time.

The Dhimal society is still a concrete example of a contemporary traditional community among whom some old traditions have already disappeared and some are in the process of being transformed. Thus the comparison of different aspects of social organisation of Dhimal people and other people living in Nepal can help to ascertain the nature and extent of these changes.

For a better understanding of the Dhimal society, the author has attempted to clarify and conceptualise some key roles in the structure of family, specially the male roles, as also in the religious festivals and worships of the community, which form and hold together the structure of the society. It has been attempted to analyse the sociological and economic range and hold of the male role. Male role among the Dhimals, as elsewhere, is seen as a complex core of social roles within the family, which acquire different meanings and authority in relation to role of others like, women and children within the family or household, and in some instances, in the whole social system and sub-systems outside. In a society which is affected by a process of rapid social changes, this needs consideration and study of the ways in which the changes in the economic, social, political and religious spheres including the impact of the sociey, particularly altering the male roles from time to time.

On a very broader canvas, this process operates more or less in rural communities (with urbanised influence) and effects corresponding changes in the male roles.

The developmental perspective approach was applied as a pioneer in Caribeean Anthropological research by R. T. Smith (1956) in his study of Negro families in British Guinea. He combined a clear and systematic developmental approach with a structural one, in which the relationships between the family system and external ones were ascertained and established. In particular, he emphasised the relevance of economic and occupational variable and their infiuence on family structure and process. This type of approach had been used among others, by British anthropologists Fortes. Goode and Leach (1958). In the present study, the author has made this theoretical approach to study the particular circumstances prevalent in Damak Panchayat, but in many instances, substantial modifications and additions were introduced to meet the requirements of this stvdy of the Dhimal society.

□

CHAPTER TWO

THE SETTING

The area of this study is Damak Panchayat which is situated in the district of Jhapa in East Nepal. Damak is about 30 miles west from the district head-quarter Chandragadhi. It constitutes the political and economic centre for several other Villages located in this region.

The District of Jhapa is 1000 ft. -2000 ft. above the sea-level. To its east and south are west Bengel and Bihar of India. The border is demarcated by the big river Mechi. Simultaneously its borders of north and west are separated by the districts of llam and Morang of Nepal. Nepal is divided into 75 districts for its developmental purpose. During that time, the area of the district of Jhapa was similar to that found in 1971 census, havining 1, 442. 11 square kilometers. It is seen that now its population has increased three-fold. The density of population is highest in East Nepal, being about 171. 75 persons per Square kilometer.

Damak Panchayat is one of the 44 Panchayats of Jhapa district. This Panchayet lies at the extreme west of Jhapa district bounded by Morang district of Nepal on all its three sides except north, which is bounded by llam district. To its east lies Ratuwa river and the Mawa lies to its west. Besides these two big rivers, there are also small rivers and rivulets like Dhobini, Betini, Dhukure, Kharkhare, etc. These rivers have made the soil of this area fertile.

There are a few foffices here, such as Rastriya Banijya Bank, J. T. A. Office, Police Station, Post office, Malaria Eradication Centre, Tax Collection Office Famely Planning Centre, Agricultural

Bank, Health Centre and office of the Roads Department. There are 13 schools, of which oneis High School, 10 are Primary and 2 are Middle Schools. Two Kindergarten Primary Private Schools have been set up in addition, which has already earned a good reputation. In all, 2000 girls and boys are it udying in these schools.

The total area of the Village Panchayat is 3067, acres. On the basis of population, the per capita distribution of land is 0.8525 acres on the average.

According to the 1971 census, the total population of the Panchayet was 13,993. of whom 7348 were males and 6645 were females. The total number of houscholds was 2190, with an average family-size of 5-7 members.

According to the 1981 National census. the population of Damak Panchayat has increased to 25150, of whom 12,717 are males and 12,433 are females, There are 3636 households now.

The current census shows that the population is increasing at an alarming rate. In a decade, almost cent percent population has increased. Factors like, migration from the surrounding hills, deforestation and establishment of new settlements, land grabbing eradication of malaria, establishment of educatlonal institutions and opening of the East-west Highway which runs through this Panchayat have together contributed to this rapid increase of population here. The Damak Bazar area has gradually developed like a small township since 1970.

There are more than two dozens of ethnic groups living in this Panchayat. The Dhimal people are the oldest original inhabitants of this area. Besides other communities, businessmen like, Marwaris, Newars and a few Bengali families are seen living in the market area of this Panchayat.

Damak Panchayat consists of several villages as Bhangbari, Dandagaon, Beldangi, Kharkhare, Madandangi, Dankini Bhalukhudi Dhukurpani, Peepire, Jhambujhar, Dapgachhi, Golatar, Dumsetole, Dogare, Tarabari, Adiayamal, Dhardhare, Arnakhadi, Baraghare, Nalbari, Neupanetole Setumari, Thapatole, Birendra danghi, Jahada and the Tea Gardens and Damak Bazar, Biran.

Since the community taken for this study is Dhimal and they are living in different villages of Damak Panchayat, these villages will be mentioned as 'Damak Settlements' from now.

Dhimal people are regarded to be the oldest ethnic group of East Nepal. They are chiefly found in the districts of Jhapa and Morang, both situated in East Nepal.

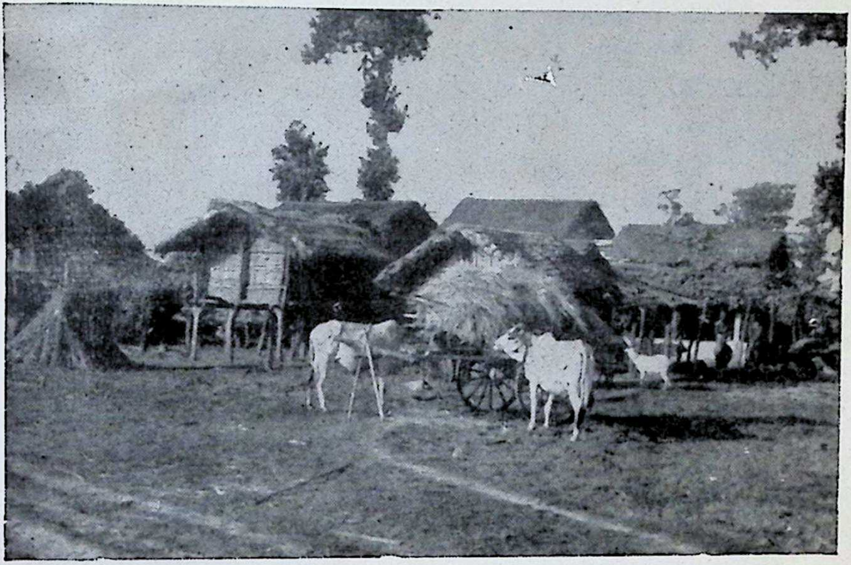
The National Census of 1952 taken on the basis of mother-tongue shows the number of Dhimal people as 5,671. In the Census of 1961 made on the basis of mother–tongue, the total population of Dhimal was recorded as 8,188, including 3,529 in Jhapa ad 4559 in Morang district (then Biratnagar).[3] Thus the population of Dhimal did not constitute even one percent of the total population of Nepal which was 97,99820 then. The nation—wide Census taken in 1971 has not however, recorded the Dhimal population separately.

Distribution of Dhimal

Nation–wide distribution of Dhimal people demarcates the geographical area of their settlements east of Tsiang (Lohandra) river, west of river Mechi, north of Babiya Birta Leti Govindapur and south of the border of the border of Malhaka. Dhimal people reside in 27 Village Panchayats, including 13 Village Panchayats in Jhapa and 14 in Morang district. In no other parts of the Kingdom of Nepal, Dhimal people are found. Some Dhimel people are also found outside Nepal, in Siliguri, and Jalpaiguri. In 1921 Census of India, Col. E. T. Dalton had found 505 people of Dhimal origin in Assam.[卐]

[卐] Nationmal Census 1961. scond Edition.

[卐] Dalton, E. T. 1874 Descriptrve Ethnology of Bengal,



Glimes of Dhimal Settlements

The area of study of this author lay in the Damak Panchayat. At present, according to my census during March '81' to October, 1981, the Dhimal population is 2783, of 1459 are males and 1324 are females. The number of Dhiml families of total villages comprise 417 in thə Damak Panchayat.

The main area of Dhimal settlements are along the foothill of Chure mountain Range, and near Dun. Topographically, this tarai (Plain) area is slopped towards north-south. That is why all the rivers emanating from Chure mountain range flow towards the south. In a broad geographical Perspective, this area is situated in the north-eastern frontier of the Gangetic Plain. The alluvial soil of this area is fertile.

The soil of Damak Panchayat is alluvial with a great quantity of alkali in it. This soil has also several variations, namely, black, sandy, soft and firm. Black,smooth and alluvial varieties of soil are good for cultivation.

The Damak panchayat has the climate of sub-tropical type with a good deal of humidity in its atmosphere. This hot area experiences a heavy rainfall anually. The temperature fluctuates between 36/37 Centigrade in summer and 4/5 Centigrade in thə winter. The aveage rainfall of this area is 2884 millimeter.

There are green forests in this area, as in the subtropical zones. Commercial significance of these woods is very great. In the most famous charkose Forest (8 mile of forest) lying in this area, Sal (Shorea robusta), Oak (Quercus incana), Khair, Simal and small kalikath and bamboo varieties are commonly found. However, due to the rush of migrated population, large-scale deforestation of this area is taking place in recent years. Consequently, big animals like, tiger, leopard. bear, deer, elephant, ghoral are fast vanishing. Both, poisonous and non-poisonous snakes are found during the summer and rainy seasons.

Means of transport and communication are in still developing stage in this area. The Mahendra Raj Marga (East—West Highway) passes almost through the middle of Damak Panchayat. This road was constructed and opened for traffic from 1971. It connects Naxalbari and Siliguri in the east from kakerbita, the eastern border of Nepal. This highway connects many important places of Nepal upto Kathmandu. This road connects main towns like, Biratnagar, Janakpur, Dharan, Bhadrapur, Saptari, Birgunge, Chitwan and various other places. Kutcha mud-roads connect the villages. Such kutcha roads have to be traversed either on foot or in rare cases by a bullock-cart, when available. Some of the villagers have bicycles. The author found only one bicycle among the Dhimals during this survey. He is a son of a rich Dhimal and working in the Rastriya Banijya Bank situated in the heart of the Damak bazar. Some rich Dhimals have bullock-carts. These bullock-carts are mostly used for carrying paddy to the rice mills and business centres, particularly in Damak and Urlabari. Generally those who do not have a bullock-cart, hire it for carrying paddy and pay the charges after the sale of paddy and jute which they generally grow. Regular bus services ply several times a day through the East-west Highway.

Foot-tracks, made by constant use by the people to go to other villages are found all round the villages passing through fallow lands and paddyfields, specially in the winter In the rainy season it is very difficult for the Villagers to go from place to place, because these roads become very much muddy and slippery.

Geographically there was plenty of land in Dhimal settlements but due to great deal of migration from other neighbouring hill-districts land has become scarce and too costly. For Dhmal land is the main economic base and they try to acquire suitable plot of land by various kinds of arrangement for cultivation of Paddy, Jute and Pulses, and to build a house. Dhimal may buy land outright, on rent or mortagage or as tenant or Just ge it by defo retitng a new area. However, they are too afraid to deforest new area although, they rarely do. The main aim is to have land somehow. The situation is such that, peasants look with admiration and envy upon the peoplewho own the best plot of land. And if the land has a water supply source within its boundary, this increases its value, as not all farms have wells or other local means of irrigation. The general agrarian structuere is characterized every where in Dhimal villages by the landlord tenant-relationships.

In Damak, lands are classified according to size, location, topography and the quality of the soil. In Damak, a person having 8.2650 acres of land is considered as a big farmer There are two types of land in Dhimal villages Dhanhar' and Bhith. These two Dhanhar and Bhith are classified in Abal, Doyam. Sim and Chahar on the basis of the physical properties of the soil, irrigation facilities available and estimated producivity per unit area. In Dhanhar land rice is grown and in Bhith land jute is generally grown.

The Dhimal society divide their villages into old and new village settlements. The area having a long history of such settlements is called 'old village' and the new settlement area is called 'new village'. Though the Dhimal villages are almost similar to other villages in Nepal tarai, it can be well located as Dhimal without dificulty. Some conspicuous features of a Dhimal village are that, no other communities are allowed to settle among the Dhimal people and they donot keep the kitchen-garden. Though few have started to keep seperate kitchen garden. In other words, a Dhimal village is a cluster of houses or hamlets ranging between 3-4 to 30-35 houses at most.

Arnakhadi is a typical village in Damak. It is completely built and streets and lanes are muddy. It is 5 km south-west from Damakbazar. This village has the separate identity and is situated on little comparatively highland and as such remain above floodlevel during the rains. Towards east and west there are paddyfields and to north and south are East-West highway and another vilage Baraghare respectively. Actually there is no hard and fast boundary line. Arnakhadi has its length along northsouth. At its extreme south live group of Dhimals and few Brahmin and chhetry castes. Towards the east live two families of Brahmin, a Tamang and one family of blacksmith. Two Neupane families, they too are emigrant from hills and are settled. They have a shop where soap, sugar, cigarates, biscuits and toffies are sold. The houses are built mostly in the rightstide of the wide street, facing east. The small lanes connect each house through the front part of the house. one can easily proceed towards the othe edn of the village, straight In the village Arnakhadi, as we inter we see old women and small children who are sitting and talking in the varandah or courtyard. In some cases women weaving the black threads for Petane (Sari) can be seen. Just before and at the end of the courtyard of the house two bambo poles are implanted where different unclean clothes and wet Jute stripes are hung in the Sun. They look dirty and unhygenic with the bad smell. The young girls keep their claymade Pitcher full of drinking water on the shade of the house usually facing towards the north. The Courtyard is clean and is smeared with cowdung and greyish soil.

At the right side of the house the cowsheds are visible usually with no cows, bullocks and he baffalloes during the day-time, as they are taken out for grazing by cowherds near the river Bhutrekhola which has small patches of forest and open land. The settlement in this village is compact and stretches in a liniarfashion, visualising as to how Dhimal people prefer to make their huts close to its community. Trees of various kinds such as teak, Sal, Sankhu, Chap, Jamuno are seen in and around the village.

Few Jak and mango fruits are grown. Banana trees are mostly found in the eastern side of the street. There are only two wells in the whole of this village, one at the begining of the road and other at the end. Drinking water is fetched from there and villagers wash their clothes and take bath. The wells are clean and are fenced by flat wooden flanks. There is no tank in the village. People go to river Bhutrekhola for occassional fishing generally during winter and in rainy season. Fire woods are brought from the small forest and the bamboo shrubs. There was one primary school in this village till 1975 but this school was shifted to village Jambujhar which is north to East-West high way at the centre of several villages. A long primary school with corrugated sheet roof is there. The cause of the shifting of school as said by one villager Guman Singh was that there were very few boys and girls who could attend the school. Further, the school could not runwell in empty classes. Now there are two school one in Jambujhar and another in Tarabari. All the school going children go through the wide muddy street from various parts of the villages. These schools have good reputation as people say the teachers there are good and capable.

They do not have fixed public places nor do they have any health centre locally known as healthpost, for healthpost is situated at Damak bazar. If they have useful urgent and important problems they go to village head and local panchayat member and is called there. Then the hot discussion starts there till the final opinion and decision is made. If the problem is not settled by the village panchayat member then he puts it before the pradhan panch in the larger assembly which is held regularly in its office at Damak bazar.

There are more than three shops at the entrance of the village from where East-West high way runs and there is a bus stop. These shops includes a small betalnut shop, grocery and a small village type restaurant. Many Dhimal youth gossip there with other communities on the various topics of the social, economic and political problems of the villages and Panchayat at large. This restaurant is developing like a good source of information centre for the villagers. Dhimal people do not worship any idol and do not have temples. A Hindu krishna temple was constructed before five years near the entrance of the Arnakhadi by one of the hindu liberal migrant. Now a-days a few Dhimal people go to this temple regularly. There is in every village two shrines of village dities called maharaj, where annually village are propitiated with animal sacrifices. Village festivals are held for the over all welfare of the communities. These shrines are always constructed away, usually towards the anterior side of the village, in between the groups of trees and bambo shrubs. At about two hundred meters west of the village lies a river—Bhutrekhola, where crematory places are made at present.

Most of the houses are built of poles of various size, mude of bamboo and branches of trees. The poles or the trunk of the trees are used to fasten a framework for the walls and also the frame of the upper storey, with several other poles in the middle part of the house, Clay fills in the gaps inbetween, and the whole frame is plastered inside and outside with a thin layer of clay. As mudwalls usually crack, so they add straw, dry grass to prevent shrinkage and cracks. Wooden planks are abundantly used for doors. But no ventilation system is found in these houses. They keep small windows, due to the fear of thieves.

Different materials are used for the roofs, i. e. paddy straw, dry grass, galvanised iron sheets, tiles, etc. for roofing. Among. them; dry straw or grass is mostly used as the roofing material.

Then baked tiles, galvanised iron sheets and cement are used respectively according to means. Dry grass is used as the roofing material, as they grow in abundance in the forests. Other materials like corrugated sheets and cement have to be brought from the near by town, and because of the mud-roads (not properly maintained), transportation facility is very poor and so these have to be brought by bullock-carts.

Out of 255 houses surveyed in the Dhimal settlements, 207 are one--storeyed with thatched roof. These houses are very simple in construction and costs about Rs. 1,000/—to make one. There are 44 two storeyed houses with tiled roof. The cost of construction of such a house at the present market rate is about Rs. 1500/—. There are two double storeyed houses with brick-walls and galvanised corrugate sheets roof. The cost of cons—truction of such a house is about Rs. 30, 000/.

Besides, there are two modern type of one storey houses, constructed using iron, cement and bricks. Its roof is made of R. C. C. and the cost of construction was about Rs. 50, 000/—each.

The houses are kept very neat and clean. They are generally 18 × 24 Sq. ft. in area. The walls and doors of most of the houses are lavishly decorated with paintings and drawings of the replicas of Sun, birds and flowers. In general, the main house (the House God) Sakodir should always be made facing the east. Their kitchen rooms are either separate or fixed at a corner of the main house and is used as such. Godowns, cowsheds, pigsheds and poultries are built separately at a distance from the house where they live. The roofs are much slanted and projected so as to protect the inmates from the winds and rains. There are no special places or partitions inside for sleeping. In simple monogamous family, all the members sleep in the same room. When sons and daughters grow adult, they sleep separately in the verandah outside. Some also sleep in the kitchen, in case of shortage of space. In some rich families, separate arrangements are made for the adult children.

The Dhimal society, has from the beginning, the concept of having nucleated settlements. Living together for long in forests in the past has compelled to live in solidarity, for protection from the attack of wild animals and other hostile groups or bandits. So it is found that everyone helps the other during natural calamities or for protection from external threat.

□

CHAPTER THREE

THE PEOPLE

The society of the Dhimal is like that of many other communities living in Nepal, an agricultural society who are scattered and isolated because of their underdeveloped location of their settlements and lack of communicitaon. Dhimal is called as 'Dhamal' by the Rajbanshi community' 'Haiko' by the Meche and 'Limbus' of tarai (plain) by other communities of the hills. They are also called as a sub-caste of the 'Bodo' caste by some, however, without any solid evidences. Those communities which are in constant contact with the Dhimals say, they are simple and honest and adjustable like other simple communities living in the Nepal villages. There is no meaning of the word Dhimal, in their language. It is possible that the word 'Himals' meaning Snowy mountain was substituted by Dhimal people incourse of the Semi-nomadic stage of their life when they started moving down to the tarai plain in remote past. Dhimals were originally traced back to be living in the north-east part of Nepal-Tebet Himalayan region. Then they gradually were called as Himali first (a resident of Himalaya) and then 'Dhimal' there by coinned as Dhimal and it persisted till now[卐]

The Dhimals bury and burn all the belongings and documents preserved by the dead. So it is difficult for anybody to determine their real origin. Different oral traditions and legends are there

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[卐] Regmi. R. R, (1972) Ancient Nepal, No 17, pp22 regarding their origin and history. The Dhimal society regard themselves as Kiratis (Indo-Mongloids). All the traits and characteristics of the Dhimal people are quite similar to other tribes living in the Cis-Himalayan region of Indian Subcontinent. Some of their ancestral physical features have undergone slight changes due to the effect of different biological and geographical environments they had to live in. They have a dark-brown complexion; black, dense and coarse hair, very sparsely grown moustache, beard and hair on the body. They have small eyes and their eye-brows and eyelashes have Mongoloid fold over the upper eye-lids. Other physical features of the Dhimals are a short and flat nose with a sprawled alae and broad nostrils; medium to everted lips, long and thin ears. round chin and full cheeks, and athletic body and a height slightly taller than the average height of the Rais and Limbus.

The hereditary traits of the Dhimals are again identical with those of the mongoloid people of Cis-Himalayan region. The percentage or 'Transverse crease' in their population is admittedly high. The absence of 'Hyper-trichosis pinnae auris' is also remarkable like in other Mongoloid population. The Dhimals are similar to the Mongoloids in 'Tongue-gymnastics' 'Hand clasping and arm-foldings'.

They are believed to have settled down along the north eastern Himalayan region long before 1000 B. C., or even before the coming of the Aryan to the Indian Sub-continent. According to a chronicle, extant in the form of folklore, the Dhimals have been shown as the descendants of Dhikompa. the son of Than Daba who was the youngest of ten Kirat brothers. The Dhimals regard the Limbus as their nearest kins of all the Kiratis. There goes a story about this. Once upon a time two Kiratis brothers went to Kashi (Varanasi) on a pilgrimage. Unfortunately the younger brother was somehow left behind. There after the elder brother came back all the way to the mountains all alone, chopping banaaa and Bohori trees falling on the way and became Limbu. The brother who was desperately tracking the trail of his elder brother, lost all the hope to meet him seeing new shoots already growing on the banana trees chopped by his brother and the Bohri trees turning black in the chopped places. Thus the younger brother stayed back in the plains and became Dhimal. This folk-tale is popular among all the Kirat tribes living in different parts of the hills, plains, Assam and Burma.

We find the mention of some kind of relation existing between the Kiratis and the Aryans around 10th Century B. C. in old Sanskrit books. Like all other ethnic groups, Kirat groups such as, Meche, Koche, Tharu and the Dhimals also can be believed to be living in the tarai of Nepal from immemorial time. The Dhimal society has also the same type of belief.

Though Dhimals are spread upto Assam now, their early settlement was not extended beyond the Kankai (Mai) river. According to them, there was a Dhimal settlement, west of Lohondra river which spread upto the koshi river in early times. This shows that the Dhimals migrated first from northeast parts of Nepal--Tibetan area to western plains of Koshi zone of Nepal and then to the extreme last where they live now.

Village population :

There are 34 villages in the Damak Panchayat, (table 1) where the Dhimal people are settled. In some villages, there are quite a number of families while in others there are only a few. It ranges from 1-98 families per village. In the village settlements, such as, Baraghare, Arnakhadi, Chadakpada, Adiyamal taken together there are the maximum number of population of 719 in 98 families The population and families in the villages like, Tarabari, Doghare and Dhimal Tole together are 556 and 80 respectively. The villages of Setumari, Neupanetole, Nalbari, Jahada have the total population of 409 and 67 families. Next come kharkhare, Madandangi, Dankini, Bhalukhudi and Beldanga, which have population of 464 heads and 74 families. Dhukurpani, Pipire, Jammujhar and Dipu villages have a population of 279 heads and 40 families. There are villages like, Dapgachi, Golatar and Dumsetole, which have together 42 families and 228 people. Bhangbari, Danda Gaon and Beldangi have a smaller number of population of 98 With only 11 families together. The market area of Damak has only 4 families of Dhimal people with 29 members in them. There is one house with 1 member in Ganeshtole. Thus it will be noted that the Dhimal neople are settled mostly away from the Damak township and bazar area. Their villages are located at a radius of 4-6 kilometer distance from the centre of the market.

It is seen from table that among Dhimals male are more in numbers than females by 135 (l; l. l)

Table 1

Distribution of Dhimal Population and Families according to Ward and villages in Damak Panchyat.

Ward No.	Villages	Families	Population	Percentage to the total Population
1	Bhangbari. Dandagau. Beldanga,	11	98	3.52
2	Khakhare, Dakini, Bhalukhundi	74	464	16.67
3	Dhukurpani, Pipire, Jhambujhar, Dipo.	40	279	10.02
4	Golatar, Dumsetole, Dapgachi, Dogare	42	228	8.19
5	Tarabari, Krishna manbir, Dhimal tole, ipo.	80	556	19.81
6	Setumari, Teagarden, Nalbari, Arnakhadi, Baraghare, chadakpada	98	719	25.51
7	Neupane Tole, Setumari, Narbari, Jahada, Birendra dangi, Thapa Tole	67	409	14.69
8	Damak chowk Biran, Ganesh tole, Brickbhatta	1	1	0.03
9	Damak Bazar (market)	4	29	1.39
Tofal		417	2,783	100.00

Thus, the total population of Dhimal group numbering 2,783 With 417 families in Damak Panchayat are surrounded by other caste people, living around the periphery of their settlements. The settlers around their villages are mostly Brahmins, Chhetry, Rai, Limbu, Magar, Tamang, tailors, blacksmiths, tanners, who are mostly Hindus and have migrated from the hills. Since the last decade, the Dhimal society, as a whole, are inter-mingling economically, socially, politically and culturally with alien people and their culture, and are gradually adapting themselves according to the changed circumstances.

In the demography structure of Damak Panchayat, Dhimal comprises only 11.06 Percentage where as even the Brahmin, Chhetry who have lately settled are more and are 36 percentage and 16.54 percentage respectively. Among the Dhimal population the pattern of deterioration of majority is diminished recently since 1970. Once majority, they have been changed into the third largest group.

Table 2

Population according to age and sex in Dhimal Society

Age group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage of total population
Upto 5 years	275	293	568	20.41
6 —13 years	390	305	695	25.00
14– 21 years	254	283	537	19.30
22– 29 years	188	165	353	12.68
30– 37 years	110	100	210	7.54
38– 45 years	96	76	172	6.18
46– 53 years	71	48	119	4.24
54– 61 years	44	32	76	2.38
62– 69 years	20	13	33	0.68
70 and above	11	9	20	
Total :	1,459	1,324	2,783	100

Table 2 shows that child mortality is less in Dhimal society. In Dhimal villages 25 percentage of the people are of the age group 6–13 years. Second to it comes the age group of children upto 5 years. Only 20 percent of the total population comes under this age group. 19 percentage of the population has age group of 14–21 years which is vital for an agricultural community like Dhimal because they are the backbone to agricultural life. Still more vital is the age group of 22–29 years which is only 12 percent.

The pattern of age groups shows that the greater the age less is the percentage of strongmen. Nearly 29.91 percentage of the total population depends basically on the rest of the population for their total agricultural life as well as for development of the community as a whole.

Dhimali language is the language spoken by Dhimal people. It is not represnted by any script. So there are no written records or books in this language. when Necessary, they use the 'Devnagari Script'. About its genetic classification, Grierson and konow have classified it as one of the complex Pronominalised Himalayan languages of the Tibeto-Burman family. Shafer has included it in the Bodic Division of Sino-Tibetan family. Prof. S. K. chatterji has described it as one of the Himalayan Groups of Tibeto-Burman languages. Paul K. Benedict has quoted it as Abor-Miri-Dalfa (Mirish) language of Tibeto-Burman branch, belonging to the Sino-Tibetan family. Recent linguistic Study by Mrs Subhadra Subba (1974, P. 141-143) has also placed the Dhimal language in the Sino-Tibetan family (Tibeto-Burman).

Dialect Variations:

Two main Varieies of dialects of the Dhimals can be distinguished, namely, the eastern and western, which are mutually intelligible and spoken by the Dhimals living in the areas divided by the river Mai. The eastern dialect has been greatly influenced by the Rajbansi speech. The western dialects on the other hand, has been in close contact with Tharu.

The Dhimali lanugage has some affinity with the Limbu language. There are many words as nouns, which appear to be similar to Limbu dialect.[卐] From the study, it appears that in the process of deaelopment. the Dhimal language seems to have separated from Limbu in some remote past.

Morphology and sounds:

Dhimali is a pronominalised language which makes the morphological analysis somewhat unacessible task

The Dhimal sounds are not unfamiliar to any native speaker of Nepali. The sound sytems and structures are interesting. The presence of glottal sound is a prominent feature of the language. Homophonous words are plenty in the language and Dhimal is strongly suspected to be a tonal language. Another very significant factor about the Dhimali language is the regular occurrence of Nepali words in its speech. A Dhimal is born a bilingual. Nepali is his/her second language. Though Dhimali has freely borrowed words and sounds from Nepali, yet the distinction can be esily made. The retroflex sounds which are absent in Dhimali sound system are gradually emerging in Dhimali language. Less frequent Dhimali words are thrown into disuse and being rapidly replaced more and more by active and convenient Nepali words.

Education and literacy is a new phenomenon in the life of the Dhimal Community. It was only after 1951 that they saw the vision of education when new schools were established in Damak. But of late, they have been influenced by the hill people and the changing context of situations in the country. They have started sending their children to School now. They even send their

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Ral I. B. 1976 Tipeka Tipaniharu, Darjeeling.

POPULATION STRUCTURE IN DAMAK卐

Sl. No	Caste/Community.	Family	Population.	Percentage of population.
1.	Brahmin	1275	9146	35·86
2.	Chhetry	656	4161	16.54
3.	Newar	265	1686	6.70
4-	Limbu	1 3	2010	7 99
5.	Magar (Bhujel)	146	864	3·43
6.	Rai	186	1031	4·09
7.	Gurung	19	94	0·37
8.	Kumal	56	372	1·48
9.	Dhimal	417	2783	11·06
10.	Majhi	33	199	0·79
11.	Satar	4	43	0·17
12.	Tamang	109	456	1·81
13.	Tharu	30	161	0·64
14.	Rajbanshi	24	94	0·37
15.	Biswakarma (Blacksmith)	144	923	3·67
16.	Darji (Tailor)	119	563	2·23
17.	Sarki (Cobbler)	37	187	0·74
18.	Danuwar	1	7	0·02
19.	Bengali	10	33	0·13
20.	Sunuwar	19	110	0·43
21.	Lama	7	53	0·21
22.	Yadav, Marwari	146	150	0·59
23.	Musalman	6	24	0·09
Total :	23	3891	25,150	100

卐Population Structure given above is not according to caste hierarchy.

children to far away places like, Kathmandu, Vararasi etc. for education.

Table 3

Education and literacy in Dhimal Society

Literate卐	Standard 1—3	Standard 4—7	Standard 8—10	SLC Passed	I. A. (Certificate)	B. A. (Diploma)	Tolal
93	163	154	42	10	5	2	469

According to the Census taken by the author, thers are altogether 469 Dhimal Children studying in the schools situated in Damak Panchayat, in different classes (Chart). Only 93 persons are just literate, who can write and sign their name. There are 163 students (children) going to Primary Schools, 154 of Middle-school level and 42 children in High School level. There are only 70 female students studying at various levels. It will be observed from this that greater emphasis is not given to female education, There are 10 students who have passed School Leaving Certificate (S. L. C.) Examination held by His Majesty's Government. No female student among the Dhimal children has yet passed the S. L. C. Examination. Five persons have taken the Certificate of I. A. and two are holding Graduationa Degree.

Now a change in attitude regarding education has occurred in the Dhimal society. Now they want to educate their children as far as possible, for they know that only by education one can get a job in the Government Offices.

卐Literate : Who Can Just write and sign their name

1. A.—Intermediate is called, Certificate' in Nepal.

B. A—Graduate, Diploma Holder.

Female students : 70
Male students : 399
Total : 469

The village and the world at large :

The Dhimal people and other villagers are connected with the outside world through the small township of Damak, which has a population of 25, 150, composed of different ethnic groups. There is a weekly market (hat) in Damak which is held on every wednesday. Salt, cloth, garments, spices, stationery articles, soap and other essential commodities for daily use are bought here. If they want to buy any materials not available in Damak, they go to the town of Bhadrapur or Biratnagar or Chandragdhi. The annual surplus paddy of the villagers are sold in Damak and Urlabari on the hatday. Dhimal women also come to this hat on these days to sell wine and beer, turmeric, garlic, vegetables and puffed rice. There is no library in these villages. There is one library in the bazar area managed by the local Panchayat. It has a few books, but no regular readers. Newspapers published from Kathmandu can be bought in only one shop in Damak. There are radios in some houses, mainly for entertainment and listening to daily news. There is also one cinema housed in a godown without any ventilation, which suffocates the cinema-goers. Hindi films are mostly shown and the interested villagers including the Dhimals attend and enjoy these frequently. These cinema shows have given a great impetus to Dhimal youths and women to change their taste for dress and fashion. But these have less influece on the women folk than the man folk.

Daily activities of the Dhimal people vary form season to season. Generally the flow of life is the same throughout the year. A Dhimal village stirs up into life with the Sunries. The first to get out of the room are the adult males and females. The morning defacation is done in the paddy fields. Men who possess cattle, bring them out of the shed, give them fresh fodder and drinking water from the well. Those who have a cowherd, send their cattle for grazing during the non–agricultural season. Others let loose their cattle and allow them to graze in the nearby fields on grass and foliage. By this time, women would be singing sweet songs. Then they go for washing and cleaning their dirty utensils and pots. They do not take tea. If it is the season of agriculture, those who possess their own lands or are tenants or share–croppers, take their plough and bullocks and start for the field. But in non–agricultural season, those who are not engaged in the services of other land -owners, do other works like making fish-nets, weaving on hand-loom or tending their kitchen-garden. The women take out a little quantity of paddy everyday from the storage-bin or granary and husk it. It s then boiled and served as two principal meals in the morning and evening. The young girls usually go to fetch water and bring firewood. Some children, specially girls, go out for fishing. Women, after husking paddy, clean the rooms and spin cotton thread in leisure time, for making their 'bona' or 'petane'. After taking meal, the old people take rest and the children who read in schools go to schools. Thus the daily life in a Dhimal village starts early in the morning, and after a hasty breakfast, if available, the people start their days work. This continues till evening with a small break at noon for refreshment. Evenings are spent, either to earn some extra money by securing any odd job, or by strolling about and gossiping with the neighbours or family members. Gossiping, and sometimes, singing and listening to radio, are practically the only forms of recreation here. Very seldom, people go out to Damak bazar and enjoy a movies show there. For the women, however there is no recreation, except gossiping, though they enjoy ample leisure between dawn to dusk. As there is no electricity and acute shortage of kerosene oil the people generally go to bed as early as possible.

Dhimals food, as a whole, is very simple. It consists chiefly of Bhat (rice), Dal (pulse), and Tarkari (curry), They do not include sausage in their diet. Sometime back, enough Chirainto (a kind of bitter leaf of plant) were used to be mixed up with the diet but now-a-days, these are not used so much. The Dhimal people still make less use of spices, oil, ghee and curd in their day-to-day life. Recently they have started taking green vegetables. No tea is made in their house. Among the non-vegeterian Dhimals, the meat of Goharo or crocodile is much preferred to that of any other animals. is not found here, as there is no forest now. In a sense, the Dhimals take all kinds of meat, such as, pork, chicken, duck, rabbit, rat and goat. But they do not take beef and buffalo. In the special festivals, khichri, Bagiatole and others are used as gifts. Khichri is a steamed rice and Bagiatole is a steamed rice-flour. The Dhimals use rice and its different varieties more than anything else. After the opening of Mahendra highwey (Eastwest) and the development of Damak as a market centre, and because of frequent contacts with other people, they have started taking urban -foods like bread (loaf), biscuits, cakes, chocolates and several other kinds of pastries.

The Dhimal people call themselves 'Matuwali' which means that they make extensive use of all kinds of intoxicants like, tobacco, bidi, cigarette, supari (chestnuts) etc. Without any sex bar. Among drinks, every Dhimal house prepares Gora (beer) and Rakshi (wine) for use in every social function, feast and gathering. They normally do not drink tea inside their house. But the author has observed Dhimal men and women drinking tea outside.

The Dhimal people use earthen pots and jars to carry water, to fry food-grains, to boil Yam and other ground fruits, though use of brass, aluminmum, stainless steel utensils is prevalent among the well-to-do families. Even the china-clay potteries were seen in some of the Dhimal houses, where the author was served curry in it on several occasions. Until quite recently they used to cook rice also

Preparation of local brand of wine

in earthen pots. They generally possess a few basins made of metals. They even keep their clothes in large earthen-pots called Roti. They purchase these pots af clay from pot makers through barter-exchange. Though they have names for different pots in their own language, they are not known to make any pots for themselves. Besides this, they also use the shell of gourds to keep beer and drinking water. They also use 'Pirungo Khongi' basket Doko, and bamboo sieve.

The Dhimal have special kinds of dresses suitable to their physical features and geographical environment. As the Dhimals are living in copmaratively warmer place, they wear scanty dress exposing most parts of their body. The males wear a loin-cloth (Langauti), vest (bhoto) and cap (topi). Dhimal men usually wear these days Nepali dress called **doura** (double-breasted shirt), **suruval** and cap (topi). The Dhimal women, however, still wear 'bona' (a black plain cloth with red or white stripes on the border). This is 5 to 6 feet in length and is hand-woven, covering the body from breast to the knees, and use this without the Cholo (blouse). There are different types of names given according to their design, for example, Itangi, Petane, Pataloi, Chamuthi and Dabona. These days, some Dhimal women are seen in Sari and blouse, specially in marriage ceremonies.

The male Dhimals do not wear much ornaments except Anguthi, which is a kind of ring. Earlier, the youths, specially used to wear Giliti or silver Gota, Thoka (hand-bands) and Gakali (ear-rings). The frontal ornaments of the Dhimal women are Puwanlo (large red beads), Nadoi (ear-top made of Indian coins), Khuntila (hanging ear-top worn on the upper part of the ear), Sankhai, Thoka, Hari (a golden neckware) etc. But today, ornaments like Sona, Takamala, Singli, Tise, Gulikathi, Vismala, Gojmala, Kolli, Hansuli, Chandrahar, Nakamundi, Pata, Thoka, Khaura, Aankhutti are in vogue. The Dhimal society generally do not use gold. They use mainly silver ornaments. The richer Dhimal women used to wear ornaments of gold worth thousands in the marriage ceremonies. But that is completely out of fashion now because of fear of snatching or robbery.

Last year, there was a theft in one rich Dhimal family in Arnakhadi village. The dacoits killed the house-owner (male) by Bhujali and took away all the ornaments of silver and gold. They ran away and could not be traced. After this incident, Dhimals are not even wearing silver ornaments and showing these to others. They told the author that they do not like to die in such incidents and would not like to buy any ornaments at all, but would prefer to buy pigs and domesticate large pig costing about Rs. 1500–now in the local market.

Women are very particular about their hair-do. They hardly keep their hair falling loose. Theyweave their hair in roll or knot, which is called ‘Khopa’ in their language. There are different varieties of **Khopa**, such as **Jur Khopa,** Lotang Khopa, Binda Khopa and Saitar Khopa in vogue. The Dhimal women can easily be distinguished from others by their hair-style. They do not, in most cases, make a hair-partition, and if it is made at all, the hair is combed upwards, and not sideways. They tuck flowers in their Jur Khopa, but in marriage ceremonies, they prefer to tuck leaves of tree instead.

Women do not put ‘tika’ on their forehead. Instead, they paint ‘Choka’, tatooing on their nails, arms, legs and chest. Chauka, however, is something more besides a simple make-up. There is a popular belief that the ‘Chauka, goes with the wearer even after his or her death. This type of belief is found also among the Tharus of koshizone (R. R. Regmi, 1972, Ancient Nepal, Vol. 23).

CHAPTER FOUR

Economic organization

The economic organisation of the Dhimals does not have a complex framework. In this chapter it has been attempted to show as to how this institution and the economic systems of this small community have sustained and influenced their social life. The economy or assets of the Dhimal community comprise their land, livestock, wages and earnings. commercial activities, production, and family and individual expenditure.

Land :

Land has become very scarce in Dhimal villages now. The topography of the area, though the great degree of deforestation done, and a large increase of population have together their cumulative advers effect of making usable and cultivable land available only at a relatively high price. Geographically, there is plenty of land in the area. but when the factors mentioned above are taken into consideration, the quantum of usable land becomes quite less. Because of a great deal of migration from other neighbouring hill district, Jhapa district has become a land-scarce area for local people, who are poor and can cannot pay a higher price for these. In an agricultural community like the Dhimals, land is the main economic base, and men will resort to many different arrangements to acquire a suitable plot for cultivation, and another bit, to build a house. People may buy the land outright on rent or mortagage; or just get it by deforesting a new area. The main aim is to have it somehow. Men who emigrate from other areas often do so with the idea of being able to acquire a plot in due time. This being the situation, peasants look with a mixture of admiration and envy upon the people who own the best plots of land in the full meaning of the term. And if the land has a water supply source within its boundary, this increases its value, as not all farms have wells or other local sources of water for irrigation.

The general agrarian strcture is characterised by the landlord-tenant relationship. Since the tenants are ultimately responsible for bearing the entire cost of cultivation, without having any clearly defined right on the land, they cultivate such tenancy at best, provides a precarious and often an undependable means of livelihood to them.

The Following table 4 shows the average land-holdings of 358 families of the Dhimal society living in different villages in the Damak Panchayat.

Table 4

Area of land in Bigha/Acres	Number of families
10 katha—1 Bigha (0.1653— 0.3306 acres)	40
1 Bigha—2 Bighas (0.3306— 0.66012 acres)	65
2 Bighas—5 Bighas (0.66012—1.6530 acres)	179
5 Bighas—10 Bighas (1.6530—3.3060 acres)	70
10 Bighas—15 Bighas (3.3060 - 4.4510 acres)	4

The above table shows the land-holdings on average. There are only 4 land-holders who have more than 15 Bighas, 4.15 acres of land.

Table 5
Ownership of land in Dhimal villages

Village Panchayat	Having Family	land Self owned	As well as ten-ants.	Having no land Share-cropper.	Tenant	Agricultural labourers.
Damak	417	278	80	4	10	45
Percentage	100	66.66	19.18	0.95	2.39	10.79

The above table shows that 278 families own land, 94 families make their livelihood as tenants and sharecroppers, 45 families have no land, but till the lands of others as agricultural labourer. These families numbering 358, have 967 bighas, 10 katha and 4 hur (307.15 acres) of cultivable land.

In Damak, as in Nepal itself, the tenant-landlord relationship is unsatisfactory everywhere, primarily because the official policy has long been to make the peasantry bear the burden of the financial needs of the Administrative System of the Districts.

Forms of Land Tenure :

Lands are classified according to size, location, topography and the quality of the soil. In Damak, a person having about 8.2 acres of land is considered as a big farmer.

State ownership has been the traditional form of land tenure in Nepal. However, the extensive use of the land by individuals in their private capacity for various purposes, and the emergence of intermediaries between the State and the cultivators, have tended to obscure the character of this basic relation in recent years. This system known as 'Raikar' may be regarded as a form of State Landlordism.

Raikar is the land, which the State retains under its ownership and levies taxes from the individuals who retain and utilise it. Rights on 'Raikar land' are limited to occupancy right vis-a-vis the State. In the event of default, tax arrears are not realisable out of the value of the landed property. The underlying assumption is obviously that, where dealings with State are concerned, land has no value as such, and that the rights of the cultivators are secure, only so long as they pay the taxes regularly. Otherwise, they lose the right automatically. Relations between the State and the cultivators are thus essentially similar to those between 'a landlord and his tenants', A common practice followed by the Government until 1951 was to assign 'Raikar land' as emoluments to Government employees which, in course of time, led to the emergence of 'Jagir tenure'. This 'Jagiri System' was finally abolished in 1951, after the downfall of the Rana Regime.

Gradation of agricultural lands by the Dhimals into two types is prevalent in all their settlements. The 'Dhanhar' and 'Bhith' land are the two such types of land.

Both 'Dhanhar' and 'Bhith' are again graded into Abal, Doyam, Sim and Chahar on the basis of the physical properties of the soil, irrigation facilities availlable and, on occasions, the estimated productivity per unit area. In Dhanhar type of land, the Dhimal peasants cultivate paddy, ginger. maize, millet, lentils, jute peas, vegetables and oil-seeds.

Ownership :

Enquiries made in 399 Families revealed the following details :

A total of 1416 Bighas (468.214 acres) of land is owned by these. 125 families have no land and are tenants of landowners of the Dhimal community. These 125 families (tenants) cultivate an area of 449 Bighas (148.63 acres) of land. There are 121 tenants of other groups cultivating an area of 505-17-19 Bighas. The owners of these lands are people of other castes. 153 families among the Dhimals have their own land, together owning and cultivating an area of 461-12-5 Bighas (149.758 acres). There are 14 families, who have no land and work as labour.

Almost whole of the papulation have 'subsistence economy'. 98.20% of tham are mainly agriculturist. Their occupation is agriculture. The main crops they grow are rice, maize and Jute. So they are engaged for about 9 months in agricultural activities.

Table 6

Families and population according to occupation

Occupation	Population	Families	Percentage to total population
Agriculture	2751	413	98.20
Govt. Service	10	2	0.36
Bank	8	1	0.28
Business	14	1	0.50
Total	2783	417	99.34

Some of them also pursue subsidiary occupations to add to their income, and maintain a balance between the income and expenditure. They generally pursue fishing in their spare time. There are some non-cultivating owners of land, who get their lands cultivated by tenants or labourers or share-croppers. The first type of cultivators are hose who do not till their lands but get these tilled by Dhimal tenants on half share. In this type, the owner also belongs to the Dhimal community.

The second type of cultivators are those who take lands from other castes to cultivate on the basis of 'adhiyan' (halfshare). They are also called heres as 'tenants'.

The third type of cultivators are those who have sufficient land of their own to till, without bothering to take lands from others. They till their own lands themselves, as well as hire labourers, and live on their own harvest.

Subsidiary Occupations

The problem of unemployment is growing increasingly among the Dhimals now. A very small number of them are educated. There are a few families having more male members. They generally engage themseeves every day in the near by tea factories. There are only 4 cases of service-holders among them. One of them is a Bank employee, another is a teacher and the third man works as an Assistant in the Malaria Eradication Office. The fourth is a Graduate and works as Assistant Research Officer in the Tribhuwan University, Kathmandn on contract. Percentage of literacy is very small among them as a result service and business as a means of livelihood are very few.

Cowherds :

In Some of the comparatively afluent households, there are small boys of 12-14 years of age, who work as cowherds. The Dhimal peasants call them 'Gothala'. These boys as they come from very poor and uneducated families' start working from the age of eight to look after the cattle. Gradually they become associated with other types of activites and slowly absorbed with the labour force.

After the abolition of the zemindari System and introduction of Land Reforms in Nepal, the middle and the poor peasants were quite elated at the thought that they would now get some lands of their own for cultivation. But what happened in reality was that the rich peasants bought up those extra Government lands and these were distributed among their kins, in the cases when these exceeded the ceiling fixed (8.265 acres) by Law.

They became richer and richer and allowed some middle and poor peasants to take and till their lands on share cropping basis. The zemindary System was abolished in order to do away with the rights of the intermediaries and redistribute lands to the peasants (actual tillers) directly. when this intent of the Law was understood by the villagers, the middle peasants became quite apprehensive. Besides, the persons who had come to these villages recently migrating from other hill-areas, added a new problem, as they too were mainly depending on agriculture for their livelihood. Then came the Land Surveyers of the Revenue Department (locally known as 'Amins' and started measuring the lands. Now the people interpreted the intent of the Law is to give land to those who were tilling the lands themselves. This idea persisted for sometime in the mind of not only the illiterate and ignorant-folks like the Dhimals, but also in the mind of many literate and responsible persons.

Due to political reasons a big difference of opinion and interest has grown recently among the various castes of the Damak Panchayat. This has led to a new movement among the landed gentry. They are giving more lands to share-croppers of their faithful group to retain these in, benami', whatever may be the Government policy. But these days, because of the strong desire of the Government to enforce the laws of land Reform in a strong manner, many of the landlords are threatened with even losing such concealed lands. Thus the tenants who used to till these lands, are again losing these, due to forfeiture by the Government. This is the condition in the villages, and the simple and honest tenants are again thrust into the threshhold of poverty.

The greatest problem concerning land, arises not from total shortage of land, but from lack of irrigation. Even if only wells have to be dug the peasants say, they have no means to do it. So they have to wait for rain solely, and hence timely sowing and good harvest are not ensured. Next in importance, is the plight of the share-croppers. Most of the landowners get their lands cultivated in this way : A portion of this land is cultivated by themselves with the help of a few wage-labourers. But most of it is given to poorer peasants, who do not possess any land, or may own a little. These poor peasants cultivate the lands on behalf of the actual owners on 'Adhiya' (half-share), and in their turn they sometimes also engage a few labourers for particular operattons, which, need collective labour and continual efforts of more than one man

The following table 7 Shows the average size of land cultivated by the landless farmers as share croppers and agricultural labourers.

Table 7

Area of land Bigha/Acres	No. of Families	Total no. of Families
1 Bigha–2 Bighas (0.3306–0.6 acres)	35	
2 Bighas–3 Bighas (0.6612–0.9 acres)	34	
3 Bighas–4 Bighas (0.9918–1.3 acres)	94	94
4 Bighas–6 Bighas (1.322–1.9 acres)	10	
6 Bighas–7 Bighas (1.13 acres)	3	

Previously the custom was that the share-croppers used to take half of the produce after deducting the amount of seeds that had been used; the amount going to whoever had supplied the seeds, and the owner was given the rest. But the peasants tilling the land, felt for a long time that this was an unjust way of sharing the produce, as the cost of cultivation i. e. wages of the labourers engaged and other inputs were ignored. So they organised somesort of movement for inclusion of these costs and to increase their share accordingly, but this ultimately failed. But in 1964 His Majesty's Government of Nepal introduced Land Reform Acts and, as a result, some of them got real benefit, having got the lands themselves.

Land reform is so far one of the most important institutional reforms undertaken in Nepal. A series of measures dealing with land tenure and tenancy systems were taken batween 1951-63, though these did not have any discernible impact. However, the comprehensive agrarian legislations came into effect with enactment of the Land Reforms Act of 1964. The main features of this Act are :—

(1) Abolition of zemindary System.

(2) Ceiling on land-ownership including household, fixing these as 8.4 hectares in the tarai, 49 hectares in the hills, and 31 hectares in the Kathmandu valley. Similarly, the ceiling on tenancy holdings are : 2.7, 1.0 and 05 hectares respectively.

(3) Guarantee of tenancy rights.

(4) Fixation of rent at 5.0 percent of the principal crop. Subsidiary crops were exempted.

(5) Abolition of sub-tenancy.

(6) Land acquisition above the ceiling limit and its redistribution to other tenants and landless labourers.

(7) Compulsory saving scheme was introdueed, under which owners-cultivators, landlords and tenants were required to deposit at the rate of 84 Kilograms, 56 kg. and 20 kg. per hectare for cereal crops in Kind, and 7.5, 10.0 and 5.0 percent of the value of cash crops respectively. The deposited savings were assured to be returned by the Government in cash, kind or bonds, after 5 years with 5 percent annual interest to the depositors. Now the savings have been converted into shares in the Co-operative Societies that had been subsequently set up by the Government.

This programme was enforced with full vigour, but later its momentum petered out. Since the implementation of land reforms were phased out over three years starting in 1964, it gave enough time to the land-owners to make adjustments to safeguard their proprietory rights from the purview of the Act. Fixation of ceiling, protection of tenants from eviction, fixation and control of rent and establishment of institutions for supporting services vis-a-vis the utilization of savings, have not yet ben effectively implemented.

Thus a beginning has been made in this direction by the introduction of the 1964 Land Reforms Act, but still a lot needs to be done for it to have a discernible impact on the political and socio-economic conditions of the rural people in general, and small farmers, tenants, landless agricultural labourers like in particular.

As a matter of fact, endeavour from Government side was not useless, though the result so far, is not striking or satisfactory. But in Dhimal villages, the old mode of sharing crops is still followed, disregarding the new laws. Still the tenants (share-croppers) supply everything from seeds to manure and labour, and get only half of the produce. Their main difficulties are two-fold. First, the share-croppers (or tenants) do not know the contents and implications of these laws properly, and secondly they have no way of proving that they are real tenants. For this, the Government had notified that the tenants should get themselves, registered as such, but they could not take the initiative, as the land-owners were more clever and rich, and prevented them from doing so by various means, and officials too sided with the land-owners. This led the land-owners, who had been so long sitting back and compelling the tenants to purchase plough and cattle and to till their lands at their own cost, get their lands cultivated by wage-labourers. This was blow to the share-croppers, and many of them had to starve at that time, being deprived of their lands. But when the meaning of the Act became clear to the big land owners, that giving land to a share-cropper to cultivate would not give him its proprietorship, the fear that the land would be lost unless the owner cultivates it with his own hands, was gone and the old custom was again restored. But here again, another factor always acted against the share-croppers Normally previously there used to be no written agreement between the owner and the cultivator, and only a verbal assurance used to make the deal, leaving the poor share-cropper in quite an uncertain condition about his share and tenure. It used to be like holding a temporary job, depending year to year on sanction from the higher authority. No share-cropper was certain that he will get the same plot of land next year. In a job at least, if the man is efficient; so long as

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the employing concern makes profit by employing him, he is retained. But in the case of a share-cropper, there is no such certainty. When there is a verbal agreement only between him and the owner, it is often flouted by the later according to his convenience. No doubt, a competent cultivator is preferred. But there are so many ramifications in village affairs and so many squabbles occur, that there is no end to reasons why the share-cropper may not be changed the next year. Share-cropper may not be changed the next year, There may be simple reasons like these : 'a poor relative of the owner may lose his lands through litigations elsewhere, or for some other reasons, and request his comaratively rich relative to allow him to cultivate his land as a share-cropper. So the previous year's share-cropper, who was probably a man of altogether different caste, loses the means of earning his bread. Again, there may occur a quarrel between a share-cropper and another land-owner in the next village over cutting or ownership of a tree, a very common cause of quarrel in the villages and then that landlord may request his employer who is a person of his status and have friendly relations, to take away his land from that share-cropper, so that the later would not have any means to fight out and settle the question of right in a court of law.

After the enactment of Land Reform Acts in 1964, tenants though have gained partially the right over land than expectation due to their iliteracy and poverty, are legally still fighting. But their success has been very slow. Followings are some cases to show as to how Dhimals not only are in conflicts with other communities but also with their own communities. The conflicts are deep and very discouraging.

SOME CASES OF CONFLICTS

Quarrels and conflicts between kins and other castes for getting land :

Case 1 : In the past, inheritance of property among the Dhimals was settled orally by the family members. There was no system of measurement of land. Customarily, initially the lands used to be shared equally by the village notables headman, and the Panchas. Fertile and unfertile lands were also distributed equally among them. Such distribution was not, however, made either legally, or on the basis of production. In the traditional way, after the death of the father, the land was first selected and acquired by the youngest son or younger brothers according to their share, giving the rest to the eldest brother. But this is not seen in practice among the Dhimals now. It is because, in the Dhimal society, the eldest son is generally found to be always wealthier than the younger sons, either having earned himself or having been given some cash money by his father. In case, no satisfaction is felt on sharing of parental properties on such divisions, this being small, one would simply keep quiet and would not quarrel. Many of them do not care for sharing bequeathed land, and go to cultivate the lands of others elsewhere as tenant. For example, in one of the Village surveyed, there were three brothers born of the same parents. They had to share 2.13 acres of land as their parental property. The eldest brother had orally distributed the land among the three brothers, before the introduction of the Land Reforms Act. But later the eldest brother cultivated all the lands and took the yields. His brothers worked as tenants in the fields of other men.

There were usually no quarrels for land before the introduction of the Land Reforms Act, but this is occurring now due to large scale migration of hill-people and ever increasing demand for land.

The brothers loved each other dearly but now the other two brothers want to get back their share of the property separated legally. They have referred this case to the Damak Village Panchayat for formal partition, but as it was not settled there, they have lodged a complaint in the Land Reforms Office at Chandragadhi for settlement.

Case 2 : Quarrel or Dispute for sharing property :

In the village Arnakhadi Chotu Dhimal had three sons. The eldest son was living separately in another village called Jhambu-Jhar from long since. The second and third sons were living together with their father. All of a sudden, the eldest son died. So the sons of the deceased revolted against their grand-father regarding the sharing of land, as their father has deceased. The grandfather distributed the land among them, according to his own choice and estimate. They felt that their grand-father had cheated them. So they wanted their share of land to be divided legally by the Damak Panchayat or the Land Registration Office. At first, the grand-father told that his grand-sons always spend the money he has given to collect the land revenue. He feared that these boys must squander the parental property, if he distributed the lands to them legally. But the grand-sons refused to accept this deal. How could they collect revenue till the land is not legally registered and allotted in their name ? One day, the two parties were called by the Damak Village Panchayat Officials and there was an agreement between them. But the grand-sons were not satisfied, because the Village Panchayat has no authority to settle such disputes, since legal sharing can only be made by the Registration Offiee of the district.

Case 3. Dispute regarding sharing of land :

Birmal Laxman, a Dhimal of Jhamujhar has five sons. Altogether they have 12-8-10 bighas (4.1 acres) of land, and if it is shared equally, each brother would get 2 bighas and 6 kathas

(0.79 acres) of land. The youngest son is 20 years old and the youngest daughter is aged 18 years. Both of them are unmarried and are living together with their father. The other four married sons live separately and have children. when sharing of property was demanded, the father wanted 5 kathas (0.82 acres) of land from each of the four sons as 'Jiuni', or his own share for subsistence. As a customary rule, not all the property should be divided among the sons equally, if the father is living. A portion (Jiuni) should be kept by father to ensure his own maintenance and security in old age.

In this case, the main dispute was between the eldest son and the father. Tha eldest son was not in a position to give 4 kathas of land from his share. So the other three sons told that if the eldest brother did not give any share, why should "we give our land then" ? The eldest son was angry with his father, because he had sold 5 kathas (0.826 acres) of land while he was staying in his parent-in-law's house. At that time, they were living in a joint-family and thus the money received for sale was not shared by them. This dispute arose mainly as the eldest son lived with his parent-in-law, who provoked him not to give any share from-his land. Though he would like to settle the dispute with his father and stay with him, but his wife's father would not agree, and forced him to enter into conflict with his father. So the eldest son did not take part in the meeting called by the Panchas and as a result, this dispute remained unsettled.

Case 4 Land conflict among the Dhimals :

Shyam Bahadur, a Dhimal of Dapgachi village sold 25 bighas (0.826 acres) of land to Birkulal Dhimal before the land survey was started in 1964. In the official survey of 1964, the measurement of land came as 5 bighas and 7 kathas (1.9 acres). So Shyamlal orally made an agreement with Birkhulal and started cultivating a part of the same sold out land measuring 1 bigha (0.33 acres) No complaint was lodged against him at that time and there seemed to be no dispute between them regarding this land for seven years. Afterwards the sons of Birknulal were grown up. They measured the boundary of their land, and a conflict between them and Shyam Bahadur Dhimal started. The. land revenue was paid by the sons of Birkhulal every year according to the rules. Then they made a complain against Shyamlal in the Village Panchyat for this unlawful acquisition. The Village panchayat was biased and supported Shyamlal. Shyamlal now claims that he had sold only 2.5 bighas (0.829 acres) of land at that time and not the whole. Then the Village panchayat settled the dispute by giving 1 bigha (0.330 acres) of land to the sons of Birkhulal and 2 bighas (0.06 acres) to Shyam Bahadur.

Two things emerge out of this land conflict. Firstly, no Dhimal knew the actual measurement of their land, and the land used to be sold or shared. They do it just on guess. Secondly, it shows that justice also bends, towards the socially or economically powerful man. Here Shyam Bahadur Dhimal was the ward member of that village. So he had the full support of the local Village pradhan (head) of the panchayat.

Case 5.

This is a case of dispute between a Dhimal land-owner and a Dhimal tenant The tenant Fiste Dhimal was cultivating 4 bighas (1.32 acres) of land of the land-owner Sher Bahadur Dhimal since 1969. But after two years, the land-owner gave the whole annual yield and some loan to the tenant, and his tenancy right was terminated by the help of some Village Panchas. Among the panchas, the local ward member was also present there. But the tenant was as clever and conscious as the land-owner. He was helped by an enemy of the land-owner (who is also a Dhimal), and claimed again his tenancy right. Since he had already taken the whole produce of a year and money from the land-owner as value of his share, the land-owner could not understand how could he claim the tenancy right again. They went to the "Land Reforms office to file each others claim. The land-owner took the help of the Village panchas, Ward members, some villagers, and Secretary of the Village panchayat. This time all the loans in cash and grains squashed in writting by the land-owner. Then the tenant also agreed to leave his tenancy right in writing.

In this dispute, the conflict between the landowner and th tenant seems to be of lesser degree, than the personal conflict between land-owner and his opponent, since the tenant was constantly instigated by him. In this way, in Dhimal villages, conflicts and disputes regarding land have become everyday affair. So a tenant even though once leaves his tenancy right, often reappears again to avail himself of such advantage. It shows as to how some of the Dhimals have learnt to take advantage of the Land Reforms Act. The land-owner has his own selfish motive. He does not cultivate his land, but does not also give it to any tenant. If land is cultivated by a tenant, it can be sold at his own will. Here Dhimal land-owner thinks his Dhimal tenant as a farmer of old days, and these simple cultivators are made happy by any means in case of disposal, without any written document, and they think that their tenancy right has ceased. Consequently, if a tenant takes recourse to the Land Reforms Act, after sometime the land-owner has to give one-fourth of his land as his share now.

Cas 6 : Land dispute between Dhimals and Hillmen :

This is a case of dispute between a Dhimal and a Brahmin migrant from the hill, regarding a plot of land measuring 2 bighas (0.66 acres) This land is situated on the two sides of a rivulet. At first, the rivulet eroded the land of the Dhimal. When the flood stopped and the rivulet started to flow on its previous course, the Brahmin farmer grabbed the eroded land belonging to the Dhimal, as his legal land and cultivated it. According to the version of the Dhimal, this land occupied by the Brahmin belongs to his boundary and he is still paying the land revenue in a regular legal way. The Dhimal told that he wanted to lodge a complaint to the Government officials, but the Panchayat officials assured him to settle it locally in the Panchayat, and prevented him from going to the District Headquarter of Jhapa, Chandragadhi, which is about 45 km. east-south from Damak. Regular bus services ply there. But the local Panchayat was unable to settle this dispute. The Dhimal could not read and write. He is simple, honest and faithful, whereas his opponent is educated, clever and has political influence. So he could not go to file a complaint in the Magistrate's office. In this way, even if they know that the justice is on their side, some Dhimals cannot lodge a protest properly in a written paper in the proper office, because of their illiteracy. This example shows how the new-comers from the Hills, generally the Hindus of higher castes, have started eliminating them economically and making them landless people. There are many such evidences in the Complaint Book of the Village Panchayat. Some cases were decided in favour of the Dhimals, and in some cases, they were not favoured for want of documents and strong witness and political supporters against them.

Almost all cases excepting the last, were filed by the Dhimals in the Damak Panchayat. The last one was instituted by a Brahmin. All these conflicts and disputes were regarding cultivation and land. The complaints varied in various cases as discussed above. Disputes on land are increasing, because from the very beginning the Dhimal farmers were not particular to demarcate their lands in a proper way. So, as soon as the Land Reforms Act was enforced and the ceiling of land and tenancy rights were given effect to, these people were bewildered, and naturally could not manage to demarcate their land-boundaries and protect these. From the cases mentioned above, it is apparent that the economic transactions and land problems between the Dhimals and the Brahmins are increasing and the quarrels are becoming an everyday affair. They do not mutually solve their disputes. The Panchayat and the Land Reform office have to deal with a large number of such cases. Hence, there occurs long delay in regard to agreement or settlement of such disputes. Previously, the Dhimals were already inter-mixing with the Hill people. They regarded them as educated, clever and religious and wanted to learn many things from them. They also learnt many things from them. But now they claim that they are also like them being 'Nepaii citizens', and they have also the doors of justice open to them. In this way, the Dhimals and the Hillmen are being involved in conflicts, disputes and quarrels among them, mainly for land.

Only 5 cases of theft and crime were fonnd against the Dhimals in Damak Police Chowki. Besides these, no other significant cases are seen to have been lodged against them. It is because, smaller quarrels are always locally settled by the Panchayat members. These people have no tendency for committing crimes and suicide. They have no big quarrels in the family, since there are no social complexities and mental torture among them. The woman can be remarried after paying compensation to her previous husband by the second husband. The widow can marry again to establish a new house. A woman is allowed to go with other men, after her marriage, if she is dissatised with her previous husband, which helps to maintain some sort of peaceful atmosphere, with little irritant in Dhimal values, customs and norms and society.

In short, the social system of Dhimals before 1950's was chiefly limited within their villages and were not organised as that of today, The relationships between their villages were also limited to some extent, except in community festivals. The meetings by the Majhi were held only after complaints. The

Majhi and the Village panchas had made their own rules and any social events were sanctioned or disapproved according to these norms by the Dhimals. Sometimes, these rules seem to have no practical application, but no one in the society object to these. This is justified by the brothers' relationship after the sharing of the property of their father, and the father 's share of land according to his own preference, which the sons do not oppose. There was no single person to challenge the authority of the male-dominated society. Earlier, their relations with thc Government were limited to paying land revenue to the Village Headman, who was the representative of the Government. But now the situation has entirely changed. Their vision is widening. Their participation in village affairs through the Panchayat is significantly developing their rights and obligations, as a true citizen of Nepal. Thus they are reaching upto the Centre, Rastriya Panchyat (National Assembly) to voice their demands upto the king of Nepal, if the occasion necessiated this.

The sale and Purchase of land patterns in Dhimal villages gives the gloomy picture regarding their stability in land holdings. Since, they are poor innocent and extravagant specially during feasts and festivals, they are selling out their land to cleverer and dominating other Castes who have recently settled. The following table 8 shows, as to how the pattern of sale and purchase of land in Dhimal villages is going on since 1971 卐

卐 Source :—District Land Reform and Land revenue office Jhapa, 1981.

Table 8

No of sample households—296

Sale and purchase of lands by Dhimals to and from other communities

(1971-1981)

	Area of land	No of Families	Percentage	Cast or community
Land sold to Dhimal	(68.76 acres)	125	42.23	Dhimal
Land purchased from non-Dhimal (18.53 acres		35	11.83	Brahmin, Chettry
Land Sold to non-Dhimal	(73.149 acres)	136	45.84	Brahmin, Chettry
Total :	160.439	296	100.00	

The patterns of sale and purchase of land shows a very alarming picture. In-between 1971-81, only out of 468.29 acres of land measuring an area of 18.53 acres actually were purchased by the Dhimals from other communities, while 136 families have sold an area of 73.149 acres of land to other communities. The frequency of selling is greater than purchasing in the Dhimal society. This situation may one day turn many Dhimals into landless farmers in the Damak Panchayat. The problem of stopping selling of lands is so much felt in the Dhimal society that Government has circulated the rule that prior sanction has to be obtained from the zonal Commissioner and Land Reform Officers in case the Dhimals want to sell or transfer their land to other communities other than Dhimals. This rule is in force since four years.

Fragmentation of land is higher which increases even more when Dhimal farmers 'sell their lands for their contingent expenditures, unseen and unavoidable, like buying of new bullocks, expenses on death rites and marriages. (F.C. Bailley, 1927, p,291).

Agriculture :

The Dhimals make two-fold classifications of agricultural ands, as 'vit' and 'Dhanohar'. 'Vit' is differentiated from 'Dhanohar' in that the later is used only for paddy cultivation. They get only two harvests—once in summer and next in winter. Paddy is the main winter harvest, and jute is of summer. But as rice is their staple food, paddy is given more importance and therefore, lgrown in both the seasons.

Their agricultural calendar begins from March-April and con inues to next January. It has been observed that they are engaged for nine months in agricultural activities. They grow paddy, jute and vegetables. They also cultivate ginger, which is used as spice. Some peasants cultivate maize, millet and oil-seeds also.

Usually, two harvests are taken from 'Dhanohar' lands. In monsoon, crops like, paddy and jute are produced. In winter, paddy as well as wheat are cultivated. They use normally local seeds, though sometimes improved seeds and fertilizers are also used.

Paddy cultivation :

The structure and character of the plain lands of Damak villages have been largely determined by their physical environments. All the villages and habitations bear the stamp of their environment. Man's adaptability to his regional environment is quite clearly discernible here. The nature of crops and techniques of agriculture are also determined by geographical factors, e.g. altitude, climate, rainfall, nature of the soil, the facilities of communication and implements and inputs used.

The Dhimals largely depend on cultivation and pursue it as their main occupation for nine months in a year. Cultivation is practised in all the fields here, whether these are alluvial or not, Cultivation is done chiefly with plough and hoe. The fields adjoining the homesteads are heavily manured, but elsewhere it is done scrappily for lack of means. The soil here requires large quantities of manure, in order to be productive. The dung of the cattle, goats and pigs is the common manure known to them. Very few use fertilizers, as there is no irrigation facilities here.

Agricultural methods and implements used by the Dhimals are extremely crude and clumsy. They have no modern tools and machines and have developed a techniqne of their own. They have plough and a variety of implements sickles like hoe and spades. Harrows, rollers and tractors are not used. The plough is drawn by bullocks.

The most important time for the Dhimal peasants is the beginning of the rainy season. If the rain is delayed, seeds cannot be sown in time and the result is a poor harvest. If on the other hand, rain fails to come even in July or August, the plants do not grow properly and it also results into a poor harvest. Apart from these times, since irrigation is practically not done here, as also the natural drainage system is bad, fluctuation of normal rainfall at any time of the year proves harmful to paddy crops.

After the rabi (spring crop) is harvested the fields are ploughed .for Kharif cultivation. The kharif crop here consists mainly of paddy. Paddy cultivation requires great heat, humidity and a large contingent of manual labour. All these are available here These lands are comparatively hot owing to their low level, and the nighbouring rivers and rivulets provide moisture. The alluvial soil in some area is rich and could be easily be arranged and cultivated. The great density of population in this region provides plenty of cheap labour, which also enables to take minute care for protection of crops. Heavy and incessant rain from June to August which occurs normally, is always welcomed by them, and so is the fine weather with occasional showers at other times. All these have made this region preeminently well-suited for rice growing.

The 'ropai' system of rice cultivation is transplantation and this is the usual method. In may or June, some of the plots are selected and ear-marked as sea-beds. These plots are irrigated, and are exposed to the sun for about a week. This exposur makes the surface soft and muddy. The plots are then ploughed and the clods crushed by a wooden plank. Manure is then spread over the fields, either before, or immediately after the first ploughing. It must be fully decomposed and is made thinner by dilution, as coarse fresh manure often causes damage to the seedlings. Thus manured, the fields are then ploughed and harrowed for the second time-The seeds are then sown on these plots.

The plants come out after seven or eight days of sowing. Just at the beginning of the rain, i. e. by the second week of July, when they are about a foot or even 7 inches high, preparations transplanting them are begun. For all the fields which were under wheat cultivation during the preceding winter, are thoroughly ploughed and irrigated, if there is water supply. These fields are flooded with water and made ready for paddy transplantation.

The priliminary arrangements for the actual transplantation must be made at least one day in advance. The nurseries must be flooded with water for 24 hours immediately before the plants are removed from them. Mondy is regarded as the most auspicious day for transplantation by the Dhimal cultivators. Transplanting is started usually on monday. The women workers employed for this purpose assemble near the nursery bed for uprooting the seedlings The head of the household transplants two seedlings himself before the start. This system is called 'Gofa' by the Dhimals. In case where the 'Gofa' is not performed, the women start transplanting the seedlings first. The seedlings have often to be carried to distant fields. So they are washed to reduce their weight. After washing, the seedlings, are tied into big bundles with grass-strands. The women generally participate in this operation.

On the day of 'ropa' or transplantation, all the workers, both hired and exchanged (Hantipaka), assemble in the fields where transplanting is to be done. The different tasks are divided amongst the various workers. One group looks after the regulation of water, another obegins ploughing the puddled soil, some are engaged in puddling and levelling, and some in supplying the fields in advance with the bundles of seedlings. In all these jobs, men play an active part.

When all these operations are completed, the actual transplanting is begun. This operation is carried out as much ceremony by some, as in the case of laying foundation of a new hut. The men or women selected for the transplantation ceremony, must be physically very fit and active, as they have to do long and hard labour. Sometimes exehanged labourers also help in this operation. Taking two or three bundles of seedlngs at a time, they begin to plant them. The transplanting is done from eastern side of the field to western side. This is a special kind of transplanting done by the Dhimal peasants. The fieids have already been made soft and muddy, and completely submerged. The plants are set at a regular interval of 5 or 4 inches, and from two to six seedlings together. After setting the rice-plants in their proper places sower gently presses the soft mud around the roots. No novice can do this work satisfactorily, but these women have become particularly adept in this job. Transplanting is a hard, exacting and monotonous job, and highly injurious to the health of the workers, as they usually drenched by heavy rain. To relieve their fatigue and monotony, while assisting fixation of concentration and helping to speed up the work, a sort of folk-song is sung by them in chorus.

Usually the 'ropai' is completed in a day, excluding the time taken for uprooting the seedlings. Those having only a very small field, do not lift the seed-plants on the day before the actual sowing, but do it in the morning of the day of 'ropai'. The operation begins at 6 or 7 A. M. and lasts until sunset, with an interval from 12 noon to 2 P. M. for taking food and rest. On the day of 'ropai' the owner of the field or the head of the family supplies breakfast to the labourers with beaten rice and liquor at 8 A. M. At 12 noon, a lunch containing rice, pulses, meat, liquor and tobacco is again supplied to them. At 4 P. M. again, beaten-rice and liquor or tea is served to the workers. Finally at 6 P. M. a meal containing rice, pulses, meat, liquor and tobacco (bidi) is served to them.

The 'ropai' entails a good deal of expense. In addition to this, expenses in the shape of food are also considerable. One 'ropai' in a day is the established rule in the Dhimal villages. The bigger 'ropais' are done first. This matter of fixing precedence is mutually settled and it helps to compensate the dearth of labour.

When the plants are transplanted, they are watered at regular intervals. The fields are kept under water for a month or more. While the watering is continued, some weeds also grow in the fields. These have to be uprooted and therefore weeding is again done with the watering. Greater attention is given to watering, which is carefully supervised and often repeated according to needs. There is a communal control over the water supply channels and every grower gets the requisite water in his turn. However, there are some small water channels individually owned by many peasants. Sometimes disputes arise in respect of supply of water. when the paddy plants grow up and grains begin to form on the stalks, the water is drained off the fields. But in some places, where water is available, final watering is made a few days before the harvest, in order to swell up the ears of the corns. The rice is harvested in November/December.

They do not practise rotation of crops, as the nature of the soil is not well-known to them. They don't also care for it. Irrigation on the whole, is not good in this region and most of the peasants have to depend on the natural rainfall. Small tributaries and other perennial streams and rivulets are commonly utilised for irrigation. A very large investment for labour for canal or dam construction has to be made by the Government for providing irrigation to improve the productivity of crops here and to ensure the prosperity of the Dhimal people.

Family is the main unit of agricultural production among the Dhimals. They say that only seeds and labour are not sufficient to get a good yield of crops, but God must also bless the peasants by supplying adequate sun's heat, wind and water in right time. Thus we see that agricultural activities of the Dhimal peasant are directly related to nature. In order to avoid destruction of crops from various kinds of birds, cattle and evil-eyes, they place an effigy of a man, made of straw and torn pieces of cloth in the field. This effiigy is kept in an upright position at eastern or western side of the cultivated field. It is called, Dhyan Kojhunti' by the Dhimal peasants in their language.

Harvesting is done by the members of the family or by paid labourers. Sometimes, it is also done on 'exchange basis'. The paddy is cut from the middle to provide straw for domesticated animals.

The method of harvesting is almost the same for every kind of crop. Only unexpected foul weather makes it hard and labourious. Once the harvesting has commenced, the peasants have little time for anything else but cutting and carrying grains, as they are very anxious, lest the rain falls and spoils these. Though rain hardly falls at such a time, yet they are very careful. Transporting the grains is not so difficult because there are plenty of carts and plough-oxen, which can be used.

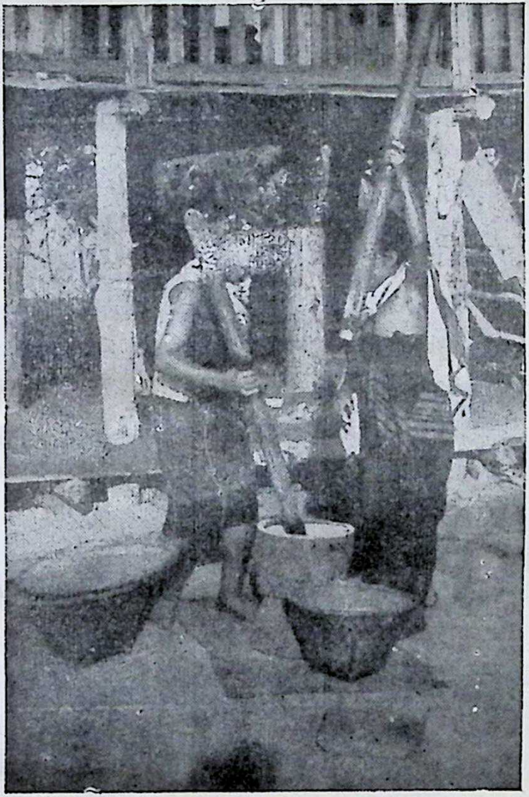
But most of the sheaves cut are generally carried by men on their head or back from the fields to the threshing floor or home for storing. Sometimes it is kept for drying in the open. This is the most critical period, as the farmers have to complete all these works within a very short space of time. If this is delayed, sometimes rain may come and waste the patient and prolonged labour of so many months by destroying the crops. Moreover, ripe crops standing long in the field without being reaped, causes wastage due to destruction by birds and animals and their quality too deteriorates. Sometimes these are also stolen. Besides delay in reaping means also a delay in sowing of the next crop, and this fact counts a good deal to the peasants in this area.

Before harvesting, a small area is demarcated in the field by throwing rice-flour and it is then covered by straw. No person of other caste is allowed to enter into this area. They believe that if any one does so, the Clan God becomes angry and the crops next year become very poor. So on that very day, blood sacrifice is offered to their dead ancestors to appease them. **Pinda** (rolls made of boiled rice) is offered to all their dead ancestors and these are kept in a banana-leaf in a row. The **Pinda** is mixed with the blood of hen. Then they eat rice, meat and liquor wit joy.

Harvesting is the work of both men and women. Women d not work for a long time in the field during the months of Jaisthas (April-May), Sravan (June-July) and Bhadra (Aug-Sept). I other months, they work simultaneously for long hours with men.

Men and women in groups of three to six, with sharp sickle begin to reap the paddy fields at the end of October, or in the first week of november. They hold the sickle in the right hand, take as many plants as they can held in the left, and cut them close to the middle. If the field is wet, they stand and stoop sufficiently to enable them to grasp the ripe plants. The whole operation is done without sitting. As the men and women reap and move forward, they gently spread the harvested plants over the reaped portion of the field. The plants are then left to dry for four to five days. After drying, they are heaped on the field in stacks. Rice plants, as a rule, are not taken to the threshing floor. The first to be harvested is the upland paddy, as it ripens earlier owing to its early sowing, and the lesser humidity of the soil then. Every Dhimal peasant has his own threshing floor, which is usually constructed near the place where there is a good flow of air Such a floor is commonly paved with smooth mud. During the harvest season, all the floors are full of cut-paddy plants.

The technique of threshing varies in different villages. Sometimes the threshing of rice alone calls for most laborious and elaborate methods. There are three methods of threshing paddy in common use. In the first method, the ears of paddy on the stalks are spread out thickly on the threshing floor, and bullocks are made to trample these in a circular motion continously separating the grains and the straw. The grains fall out of the stalks, as the treading proceeds. As many pairs of bullocks as possible are employed for this by mutual arrangements with other peasants, which is the most prominent feature of agricultural activities of the rice-growing communities here. When the grains and the straw have been sufficiently trodden, as much of the straw as possible, is raked away with sticks. After this, the grains are winnowed and the rice is put in to bags and sent to the store-house or granary. In the meantime, the best rice is selected and kept separately for the next year as seeds. These seeds are kept inside a bag-like structure or container called 'Nedhu'. This bag is made of twisted straw. When the seeds are kept inside, the external surfaces are smeared by earth and cowdung paste. Then these 'Nedhus' are kept inside a big earthen pot. If the seeds are kept like this, these are not harmed by any kind of worms.



Husking of rice in wooden mortar

Hulling is exclusively the women's job. It is done by mortar (Okhali) which is quite different from those employed in other hilly regions and plains of Nepal. Mortar is known here as 'Sim'. Wood is abundantly available in this area. A cubical-block about one-and-halif foot is procured and a hole of about one foot in diameter is cut in the centre, by chisel and hammer. The wood when thus hollowed, is ready as mortar. Hulling is done by pestles, which are heavy clubs, measuring 5 to 6 feet in length, and about four-inches in diameter. They are usually made of 'Sal' wood available near the villages. Their middle portion, where they are grasped, is a little narrower and the lower end is always bound with an iron ring, having teeth-like serrations in it. In the cavity of the mortar paddy grains are heaped for threshing. The heap of grains is then pounded with the pestle. The women lift the pestle by grasping it in the middle and strike it upon the grains. All the strokes are made into the cavity of the mortar. Usually, one or two women take part in this work. They pound rice early in the morning and sing songs to lessen their fatigue. Generally, as much rice as is necessary for a day, are hulled at one time.

Paddy, when pounded, is cleaned thrice by means of moving winnowing fan, which is held at such an angle to the wind, as allows the chaffs to fly-off The first husking is done, when the grains are partially hulled. The hulling and husking operations are repeated twice, and the rice is made ready for cooking. Five kilograms of paddy, usually, yield two-and-half kilograms of rice. The husks of the first hulling are used either as manure or as feed for the oxen, pigs and chickens. The husks of the last hulling are given to the milch cattle.

In the Dhimal society, the division of labonr is generally made on the basis of age and sex.

Children

Children in this group consists of the age of five to twelve years. The boy who is over six years, goes to graze the cattle. Girls bring water from the near by wells and help their mothers in washing the household utensils. The girls of seven years go for fishing and take care of smaller kids. When she is about nine years, she starts cooking food. During this time she also pounds 5 kg. of paddy in the mortar. At ten, she goes to the field, transplants the seedlings and at twelve, she can well-prepare meals for the whole family. The same is the case with the boys. The boys of ten to eleven years of age go to the field and assist their father in farming

Women :

The principal duty of the women is to do all household works, prepare meals and look after the children. During monsoon, she gose to work as a labourer to earn money. She has also to assist in transplanting and harvesting. She cleans the house. On market days, occasionally she goes there to sell liquor, chillies, hardi (turmeric) for earning some cash for meeting domestic expenditure. Besides this, she goes for fishing occasionally.

The position of the women in the Dhimal society is naturally affected by the ecological condition

The woman bears the brunt of manual labour also. She has to do every kind of agricultural job, except ploughing and harrowing. She is a hard-worker, simple and industrious.

In the inequitable division of labour, the majority of the tedious and fatiguing have been assigned to women. She has to break up the clods of earth, transplant the saplings and do weeding and reaping. She must pound the paddy into rice carry the manure from the sheds to the distant fields and fetch water from the village well. She must also cut and carry huge loads of grass and fuel from the forest. In addition to these, out door works, she has to take to the menfolk, their meals in the field, sweep the byre, chop up the fodder, feed the cattle. as well as, look after the children. In short, she does not, only plough, dig or drive carts, but there is no other form of labour, which she does not do."[1] For here, there is no slack season, the whole year is spent in hard toil.

men :

The menfolk have reserved some special works for them selves. They plough, dig, and drive carts, make embankments and excavate ditches for irrigation. There are many jobs common to both sexes, e. g. carrying grains after harvest, threshing, etc. Exeept during the sowing and harvesting, they pass their time in comparative ease.

This unnatural division of labour, under which the fieldworks are mostly done by the women is a burden to them, while the men do comparatively less exacting works except ploughing and harrowing. Such inequitable divisions have produced many social evils. Polygamy❀, which was generally practised by the illiterate classes of people to get free labour of their wives, is the formost of these. A cultivator who used to possess a large holding, had usually more them one wife earlier. He used to marry twice, thrice or even for the fourth time, in order to get free labour of more than one wife to cultivate his lands. This was considered to be the first essential need of a cultivator then, and his wealth and prosperity were measured by the number of his wives.

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1. G. R. Darling (1969). The Punjab Peasants in Prosperity and Debt, pp. 39-166.

❀ These days 'polygamy' is rare because of economic condition and distribution of land-holdings which have reduced greatly.

The inferiority of woman's position is reflected also in the system of marriage prevalent in the Dhimal society. Wives are literally brought as **chattels,** and the Dhimal man can use her as he likes. They not only work for them, but also beget children for them. From daughter's marriage, he gets 'rits' in cash and Kinds.

This state of affairs also explains the treatment received by the woman and the legal status assigned to her in the Dhimal society. In theory, she is ofcourse, the man's other self, or power-incarnate (Shakti). On occasions of religious celebrations, such as marriage or pilgrimage, she occupies a foremost place. Though polygamy is discouraged by their songs and proverbs ("Two marriages make the life of a man as wretched as that of a dog"), it is still prevalent. In practice, however, things are entirely different. A woman is compared to a 'worn out shoe', which can easily be replaced by another. Inside the house, she must take her meal after all the men have taken it. In respect of clothing and ornaments, she receives a niggardly treatment. She cannot dispose of the household goods as she wishes, or when she requires. She can not sale or distribute grains in large quantities to others. The men are custodian of all cash, and all monetary deals are their exclusive concern. During the harvest, her husband coaxes her into toiling her hardest, but at other times, she is treated as a livestock. The husband chastises his wife, and the men often talk boastfully of the necessity of maintaining discipline in the house. The women have no social rank whatsoever. She sits to weave clothes by spindles and handloom, for the men and women of the household. Her only enjoyment is sex acts with her husband and occasionally going to the fair in Damak Bazar and Urlabari. Her wealth consists of a few silver ornaments, the chief of which are bracelets, bangles, ear-rings and a necklace. She tames also some animals like goat, pig and prepares and sells liquor in the fair. She is the first member of the household to get up in the morning, and last to go to bed at night.

The woman's legal disability is a corollary to her social inferiority. A daughter is not entitled to any share in her father's property. She can have a share however, only when she is numarried and is over thirty five years of age.

The causes of this **hard** lot are to be found partly in the influence of the environments and partly in the peculiar stage of social development of this community. It is probable that the Dhimal male, when he first introduced agriculture, was himself engaged in all onerous tasks, like the clearing of the fields and making of the cultivable lands by deforesting the area he had selected for cultivation. While he was thus employed, his wife and children assisted him in preparing the soil and sowing the seeds. Later on, this division of labour became stereotyped, even when the work of clearing the forests and fields no longer taxed his strength. At a stage, man instead of helping his wife in the details of cultivation, became indolent, because generations ago he had finished his part of the job.

The transition from pastoral to agricultural stage also seems to account to the low status of the women. In the pastoral stage, the women were bought like animals. When, after leaving semi-nomadic stage the Dhimal people became agriculturist, even then the **old** practice was retained on account of its convenience. Owing to its exceptionally difficult nature, the cultivation of new lands called for many hands and the pastoral custom of purchasing brides enabled the Dhimal man to procure as many extra hands as he could afford to keep. He then tried to get as much work as possible from these women. And once the system which enabled one section of society to live on the labour of another was introduced, it could not be changed in the absence of any rebellion on the part of the oppressed. But recent changes in legal status of the women and political and social reforms have given a slow push ahead to it. Now their position is gradually changing. On this change depends the future welfare of the Dhimal community, for it is the social status of the women that largely determines the mental and moral progress of a people.

Ceremonial feeding of harvested paddy :

The ceremonies and festivals connected with agriculture are held personally either at seed-time, or the harvest time. A ceremony of blessing of fields by making offering to the field deities and other supernatural powers is performed with sacrifice before the seeds are sown, especially on monday or friday.

When the crops are ripe and ready for harvesting, a few ears are brought to the house on some auspicious day and offered to the household deities A few are then stuck above the lintels of the doors with cowdung these days, due to the influence of the higher Hindu castes. This ceremony is locally known as **'Naubangi'.** Harvesting commences after this ceremony is over.

When the harvesting is finished and the grains have been stored inside the house, a day is fixed in consultation with the village Dhami, on which the new corn is first cooked and eaten. Special dishes are prepared, and on one of them is spread the yellow-ears of the grains. Before it is eaten, it is offered to the village and household deities, to the gods of the fields and their boundaries. A simple prayer for general prosperity is also offered to them. Anyone who eats the new corn without first offering it to the deities, incurs their wrath. Such a dereliction is believed to result into a poor harvest next year.

Domestication of animals and livestock :

Livestock of the Dhimals consist of cattle, goats, ducks, fowls, pigs, pigeon etc. Cattle are kept in separate cattlesheds constructed generally near their residence. These sheds have open sides with a thatched roof.

The tarai cattle are remarkably big in size than the hills' cattle. They are usually tied during the night in the lower portion of the dwellings of the hill-people, but separate sheds are used in all the dwellings of the Dhimals for keeping them. These sheds are littered with dry leaves mostly available near the village. But because of destruction of the forest areas, now paddy and straw are generally littered on the floor, on which the cattle rest in the night. During the day-time, they are driven to the neighbouring fields, but the milch-buffaloes are usually kept at home and stall-fed by the womenfolk. According to the cattle census made by the author in a sample of 192 households, these contain the following cattle population :—

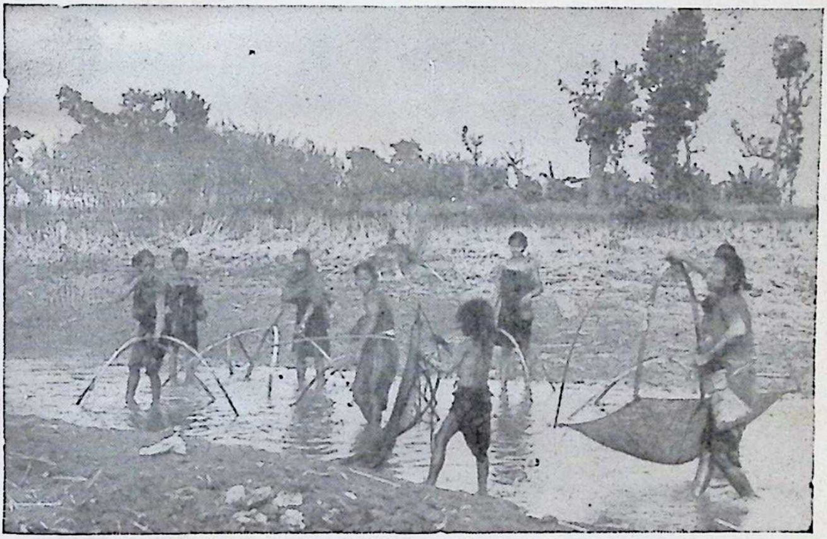
Pigs	—	328
Bullocks	—	561
Cows	—	157
Buffalo cows	—	20
Buffalo bulls	—	63
Goats	—	62
Pigeons	—	51
Ducks	—	89
Fowls	—	710
Total :	—	2041

The cattle reared by the Dhimals suffer severely from the ravage of cattle diseases. Their average rate of mortality is, however less than its occurrence in the hills. Foot and mouth diseases of the cattle are very common. The quack remedies used by them are not very effective. But recently they are using vaccination and veterinary medicines. Cattle pastures here are also rarely found. Even the public pastures like 'Chyandanda' is inhabited by some families of other people. So there is a great problem for pasture lands. On every wednesday, hundreds of animals are brought and sold in the Damak Bazar. The Dhimal peasants also sell their bullocks, cows and fowls in this market. A pair of healthy bullocks cost about Rs. 2000/-to Rs. 2500/-. These are regarded as the most important item for sale in the market. Previously, most of the Dhimals had no cows. Most of the houses have pigs and fowls. Meat of pig is a delicacy to them. It can also be offered to all their deities.

The Dhimals prefer bullocks and buffaloes, because they are greatly useful for ploughing and drawing carts. Cows are not domesticated for milk, as they do not like milk. They like meat so much, that they take even the flesh of a lizard called Gohoro by them. Recently cows are domesticated for manure. Lack of cowherds and pasture lands have created a problem for rearing cattle. The livestock are decreasing, as a result. Though such animals are their wealth, they are rather discouraged by the deforestation to keep these.

Fishing is a sort of recreation in the Dhimal society. Dove (bird) goose, deer, rabbit, wild-cock, lizard (Gohoro), tortoise, peacock, rat are the animals ordinarily hunted by them. Fishing is done near their residence in the river or rivulet and the places where rain-water accumulates. They like a kind of fish living in the mud called 'Hile' by them. They also like 'Rohu' and other smaller types of fishes. The fishing implements include various kinds of nets called 'Pohi', 'Chauki' 'Dungri' and 'Solti'. These nets are prepared from bamboo-strips and twine-cord. These are made by Dhimal men during winter, when they get plenty of leisure after harvesting their crops.

Besides farming, the Dhimal people are also interested in hunting and fishing. Tools they use for hunting are gulthai, Dhanu Khar (bows) and Khapar (lance). They use hooks, nets or



Fishing by women and children

jali for fishing. They use various tools like, Dufe (axe), Thukuni, Khukri (bhojali), Gulthai (a thick cotton thread used to throw stone), Kodala (spade), Kachiya (scythe), Khonta (digger), Ara (saw), Khorandi (vegetable cutter), Chuppi (knife), Dau (hook), Jheer (long needle) and plough for different purposes.

Hunting : Though the Dhimals make some income from cottage industries, but it is quite less in comparison to the income from agriculture. Again hunting seems to be a hobby of the Dhimals. Since the forests have been destroyed, they have little option for hunting now. However, they used to get deer, lizard, hare and ate these. Now-a-days they hunt birds. The flesh of these games is a most delicious food for them. This also saves their money to buy meat from the market. In the same way, fishing is practised by them, to avoid any expenditure on this. These people are very fond of meat. So if they can afford, they eat meat daily.

Hunting was mainly done previously with the help of domesticatcated dogs. These dogs followed the hunters into the forest in groups of 10-15 and chased the animals till they became too tired and immobilised and killed or caught by the hunters. They generally used 'Khukuri' (Bhojali) and Vala (Spear) in hunting. The most-liked game was lizard (Gohoro), whose flesh they relished the most. But these lizards are not found now-a-days. These have become scarce due to large-scale deforestation and killing, and the Government's ban on hunting of wild animals. The Dhimals are now less interested in hunting. But small children and young boys and girls and even the older people still go for fishing. Dhimal women too often go out in groups for fishing. They are as expert as the adult males. Fishes are caught for daily use. But recently it is seen that some of the Dhimal women sell fishes for earning some cash to meet other needs. Fishes are caught by small traps and nets called jal, pohi, soltee, thocha, dhugor guthi, During rainy season they keep, thokasa which is like basket having small mouth, in the river and rivulets from where quite number of small fishes are trapped.

The business of the Dhimal people mainly comprises selling of their own agricultural products like, jute, paddy and mustard-seeds. When these grains are cultivated, after keeping the quantity needed for household consumption, the rest are sold in the market. Previously the Dhimals used to go upto Biratnagar, Rangeli, Haraicha, Gouriganj and Bhadrapur for selling their products and buying their needs. They usually purchased salt, clothes and spices from the Haraicha market. But since the opening of East-west Highway, they have started to go to the near by markets or fairs. Generally they do not go far away from their residence. The markets of Damak and Urlabari are the main places for shopping for them now, since these two places are within the radius of five kilometers from their villages and are the nearest ones. Friday is the fixed market-day for Urlabari and wednesday for Damak. Urlabari is nearer than Damak from most of the Dhimal villages.

Marketing in the Dhimal settlements was a very difficult problem in earlier days. A fair or a 'hat' used to be held in every Panchayat throughout the Jhapa District, on certain fixed days. Men and women from distant villages, with all sorts of commodities come together to these markets on friday and wednesday in Urlabari and Damak respectively. As daily market is not held here, hence the need is felt to hold periodical gatherings of sellers at convenient centres, where sale and exchange of commodities are made.

As the population increases and economic life becomes more varied and difficult, these fairs 'hats' (weekly markets) become more numerous and frequent. The population of the Panchayat is fast increasing. Between 1970-80, 99 percent population has increased here. this being the largest growth among all the Panchayats of Jhapa District. Improvements in the means of commu-

Hat or Market day in Damak Bazar

nication has effected this rise. So also, the influx of the migrated people has done this.

These fairs or periodical **marts** are weekly assemblies of vendors. In these fairs and markets, they bring a great variety of commodities, either in baskets or in carts. There are also many permanent shops now in most places. The women act as vendors, side by side with men. Vendors selling the same commodity among the Dhimal women sit together and sell liquor (beer and wine), turmeric, garlic and puffed-rice. A spread-out umbrella is fixed by them as a cover from **scorching** sun or rain. These assemblies have no religious significance, nor do they provide any lighter attraction otherwise. But everybody expects to see the other villagers or friends at these markets, both for buying their needs and having a chit-chat. These become important venues during the winter months, when the harvested crops are brought here for sale. These are traditional commercial centres of this area.

These markets are dumped with many kinds of commodities of daily use. The Dhimal women do not actually have any business, but they sell their surplus vegetables, grains and wine, to buy other commodities of daily use. The cash they thus get, is generally spent for purchasing salt, spices and meat. During investigations, the auther has seen some Dhimal men and women purchasing pig's meat in Damak and Urlabari markets after selling their fowls.

The business done in the fairs, consists of buying and selling of different articles of food and clothing, and other domestic requirements and luxury goods. The majority of the transactions are done by barter. Some Dhimals were found to exchange their crops and fowls for other essential goods. But money has been introduced in such deals since opening of this area to other parts of Nepal by the construction of the East-west Highway recently.

After business, they spend most of the day in merry-making. All the visitors to the fair, men, women and children, are seen in happy mood. Everywhere in these fairs, a variety of customs are found on the market-day. People sing many kinds of their folk-songs and dance to the accompaniment of drums. Throughout the day, the whole area of the market buzzes with noise and chatter. Shopping goes on briskly, and most of the villagers are seen buying and eating sweets, which are rare in the villages. Sometimes they gather like a swarm of bees around few of the shops, admiring and buying the trash foreign-made goods. It is not easy to go along the streets, for a large crowd continuosly swerves backwards and forwards for choosing and buying goods. Pushing and jostling are regarded as one of the best forms of amusement at the fairs. Some of the visitors indulge in drinking and gambling. The gamblers regard the market-day as a 'hay-day'. They come in theirr hundreds, hold large stakes, and thousands of rupees are lost by the inepts and the unlucky. Goats, pigs and fowls are sold in great numbers. Traders keep cotton-goods, umbrellas, iron and brass hardware, aluminium utensils, grain oil, salt, tea, sugar, sugar candy, molasses and many kinds of vegetables and fruits fo sale. Among the foreign goods, some of the cheap and flimsy commodities that are readily sold, are soap, looking glass, studs buttons, safety-pins, socks, playing cards chinese goods and clothes, rubber and plastic toys, fancy tin boxes, electric torches and imitation jewellery. A host of India made and foreign-goods are also available in the shops, which keep ready stocks of these. Most of the men, women or children who come to these markets (hats) with goods to sell, buy some of these 'knick -knacks' as souvenirs, and go back to the village exhibiting them throughout the way back.

Of late, the characteristics of self-imposed isolation of the Dhimals has changed a lot due to inter-mingling in such weekly markets or 'hats' and fairs as also as Damak is now changing into a town-ship from a mere village, with a lot of businessmen of the Newar and Marawari communities having established their shops here, and a number of hotels being run by other communities.

In this changed situation, it is seen, that the Dhimal society is also changing its character gradually, such as they are now taking money in exchange of their goods, and also buying their needs in cash. Thus the 'barter system' no longer exists. The Dhimals have even started having small business as retailers too. But they feel that since they cannot invest huge amount of money, they cannot compete with the businessmen of other castes who have large capital. The business of jute, oil-seeds, rice in the villages are currently done by some Dhimal entrepreneurs. The Dhimal society at large, is also adjusting itself to the changing patterns of business in modern times.

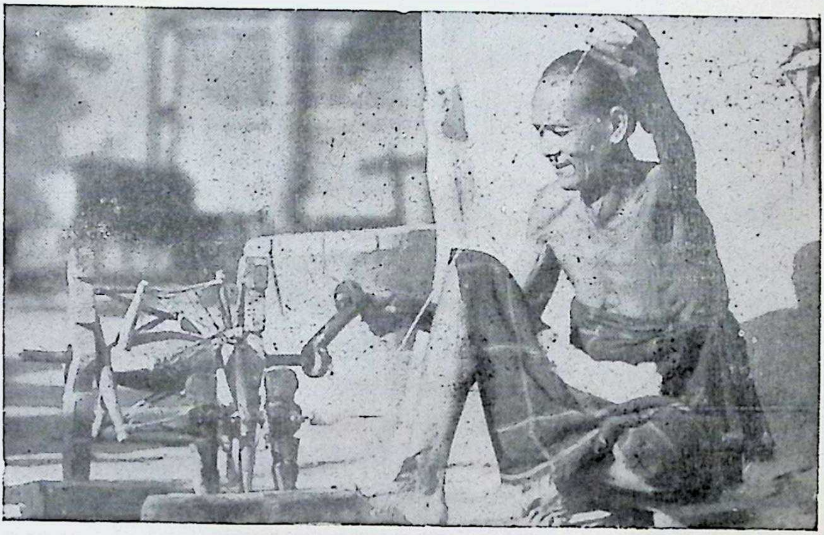
It has been noticed during the investigations that there are only four men, who have subsidiary occupations like, service and business, besides agriculture. Economy of the Dhimal society, however, entirely depends upon the agriculture even now. They have no zeal for getting higher education and are not inclined to do the conventional jobs and services. There are a few rich Dhimal families interested in business, who have access and contact with outer environments. There are also a large number of landless families having labour as thair main source of income. They work mainly in the local agricultural lands of others and get daily Rs. 10/-or two kilograms of husked rice as remuneration. These people too, now-a-days prefer to work in the households, but not in lands. They serve only their own community. No case of labourers working in the families of other castes was found during the investigation. The place they have selected for their habitation sites also indicate that they are agriculturist. They have their settlements near the river side, plain lands and close to forest areas. The soil is alluvial there and the domesticated animals could be grazed in ths forests. From this too, it can be said that the Dhimals prefer agriculture as their main occupation. Their worships, fairs, festivals and ceremonies like 'Sirijat' 'Dhang Dhange Mela', 'Naubangi' and 'Parba' indicate as to how their agricultural activities are influenced by there folk-festivals. These festivals and ceremonies have assisted in a way the promotion and performance of agricultural activities, and so they have occupied a significant role in their ways of life.

Most of the lands are cultivated by tenants, though some cultivate their own lands themselves.

The sources of income for Dhimal society are mainly the products of agriculture. They save some cash by hunting, fishing and weaving the clothes for them. Therefore, we can divide into agricultural income, as Direct income, and other savings and hidden income as 'Indirect income'. Because these help meeting the domestic expenditure though not found to promote the economic activities in other spheres.

Direct Income : The Dhimals mainly cultivate paddy, millet, mustard-seeds and jute. In some places, wheat and maize are also cultivated. The developed Panchayats like, Damak has mixed types of settlements. They have been greatly influenced by other agricultural communities. So they have started to cultivate maize and vegetables in the kitchen-gardens. The products of the kitchen-gardens are consumed by them. They have not utilised these as a means of business or earning, as yet.

They divide their lands into two types-'Vit' and 'Dhanhar'. 'Vit' is a land near the house where maize and allied cereals are grown, where as rice and jute are cultivated in 'Dhanhar' lands. They grow two types of crops, e. g. monsoon and winter crops. During monsoon, jute is cultivated, and as winter crop, rice is cultivated by them. Thus it may be said that their principal source of income is production of rice and jute.



Preparing thread for 'Bona' in Spinning wheel

The Dhimal families who have land near the bank of river or a rivulet, have no problem of irrigation. But where the source of water is not near, they depend entirely on the mercy of the Rain God. These people, like the Newars and other Hindu communities who worship and pray for rain, as the Newars pray to 'Mahchendra Nath'[卐] in Kathmandu, and some Hindu castes to 'Indra'; also worship Budha thakur. They believe that Budha thakur is the God of the sky, and if He is pleased, there will be profuse rainfall. During 'Sirijat Puja', the Dhimals worship Budha thakur for rain, just before the paddy is cultivated. They worship with blood sacrifice all the deities for the larger and best yield of their crops.

Their main crop, as that of other tarai people, is rice. Because of the Government's efforts, the Dhimals now have a tendency to cultivate new crops in their lands. They are interested to produce 'cash-crops' like jute, wheat, millet lentils and oil-seeds for having an additional source of income. Though they do not eat wheat they cultivate and sell it for cash. This is a source of income and inspiration to develop their economic condition. Probably, this sort of additional income has helped in protecting their culture. Otheswise their cultural expenditures would have been impossible to meet from the money earned by the sale of paddy only.

Though the difference is very minor in the system and manner of production of crops between rich and poor Dhimals, they have not been able to utilise the scientific techniques for the improvement of their yields in agriculture. They say that the Government's J. T. A. who demonstrates and helps to teach the scientific techniques, never comes to their village in times of need. So they are afraid in using scientific means and fertilizers, lest they may have to suffer a large monetary loss. They also assert that once the fertilizer is used, the soil loses its capacity to yield more crops,

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[卐] G, S. Nepali 1965, The Newars, United. Asian Publication, Bombay, P. 41.

as it sucks up the whole of water from it. Furthermore, no irrigation facility exists here and the crops are burnt up at times for want of water.

Thus their main sources of income are rice, jute, millet and oil-seeds. These crops are sold in the markets and rice mills.

The Dhimals are good agriculturists. They take keen interest in agriculture and have a good knowledge of the techniques. Women too are laborious and assist men in their agricultural activities. It was found during the survey that the Dhimal women work more than men. The average Dhimal has an annual income of Rs. 8,000/– from agriculture. But there are also poor peasants having an annual income less than Rs. 3,000/–.

Indirect income :

Cottage Industry : In every Dhimal house, there is at least one loom. Almost all the women know weaving while the men are engaged in the field or in other works, women stay at home. Being left alone and having sufficient leisure, they have devloped a special aptitude for spinning and weaving. They make their own 'bona' (a sort of Sari). The thread is purchased from the market and usually dyed with black colour. The looms are small and primitive, consisting of 10 or 12 small sticks and a few cords. The loom is lighter in weight. It is found in almost all the Dhimal houseses. Weaving is always performed in a special courtyard, where they set up their looms. Recently some big looms have been set up by three industrious Dhimals. Sal Bahadur Dhimal of village Jambujhar took loan of Rs. 2900/– and started work. He has produced a good quality of fabric. Last year, according to him he had made a profit of Rs. 1000/-. He invested the money taking loan from the Bank situated in Damak. This, according to him, is an encouraging sign.

Loom is considered by some of them as a source of economy. During Divali (Aushi puja) propitiation is made to it by applying red colour mixed with oil. Some believe that these looms should not be touched by other castes, as that will affect production and entail loss. This may be the out come of both their religious and political point of view. The different parts of the loom have been given the names of many deities. For example, the handle is called as 'Bhimsen', the iron-peg is called 'Chaumajhi' and the four legs of loom the are called as the gate-keepers of 'Bhimsen'. One must listen to the enchantation of the teacher, before he touches the loom. Otherwise he may fall sick. Liquor and animal sacrifice are offered to it during the enchantation. This system or worshipping is gradnally decaying among the Dhimals, because of their wider contact with various types of communities now. It has an economic significance too. They won't allow any one to touch it, because if other people knew their techniques, their income too may become less, as it will be learnt by others, who will instal looms themselves. They want to monopolise in weaving. But it cannot also be given full importance, for in small societies, skill is generally limited only among the kinsman.

Every girl must know to weave on the loom, as found among the Jyapu Newar caste of kathmandu. Otherwise, it becomes difficult for the parents to get a groom for their daughter. They used to present loom as 'bride-wealth' which is totally disappearing these days. These days, no one likes to know if a girl can weave or not, on the bride selection day. Even then, the trraditional dress called 'Bona' by Dhimal women must be made at home. So it is essential for the women to know the handling and operations of the looms properly.

They make two 'Bonas' for every woman in the house during the winter. It costs about Rs. 100/–for the two. It is comparatively cheap and helps in making some saving. Sometimes 'bonas' are even sold to Rajbanshis and Tharus, by which certain amount of cash is earned. To some extent, weaving is regarded as the exclusive cottage industry of the Dhimal women. Many poor Dhimal

Women come to place order for their 'bona', which is also known as 'Petane' by them. In this way, some Dhimals make an annual income of Rs 100/-to Rs 500/-from this work.

The Hauli system is prevalent among the Dhimals from time immemorial. In this system, a Dhimal must be present during agricultural activities, if any one from his village seeks his help. The man who is asked for such help, is not essentially has to go for help. It is not exactly like 'exchange labour'. In it, labour is not exchanged, but food and drink must be supplied to the persons who go to assist in cultivation. This system seems to have developed during the past, when they used to live near the dense forests in groups. In such a case, they needed mutual help, since no help was possible to get from outside. A similar type of system is also found among the Magars.* They too get breakfast, lunch, tiffin and supper, as the Dhimals get. But it is a little bit different from 'Hauli'. Since such help can be offered to any member of the family by the other in this system, but in the 'Hauli system' anybody in the village can be asked for any help. So the 'Hauli' system of the Dhimals can be called a 'special category of labour exchange'. The men who help in 'Hauli' are not paid, but good food is supplied to them with meat, beer and tobacco. These men do not go to any party, till they are called for such help.

This festival has much economic importance, since money is not spent and the family saves indirectly quite a large expenditure. 'Hauli' also forges social integration, since there is taboo on caste and any one can call anybody irrespective of his wealth and social prestige. This has enhanced the emotional interdependence in the Dhimal society. This is thought as an investment for the community. If a man goes once to 'Hauli' somewhere, others from that place come to help him when called, there by saving a lot of expenditure on labour. So this system has economic significance, as well as religious. But these days, it is found that rich people do not come for 'Hauli' in the houses of poor members of their community. The 'Hauli' system, at present, is found only among the poor families of the Dhimal society. It is evident that change is at the door in this respect too. No woman member is allowed to go for 'Hauli', nor there is any rule that the head of the family must go for it. Some rich families send other persons to work for them by paying them cash. The traditional conception is that 'if one is called for 'Hauli', one must go there.' Otherwise, he is seen as a mean-minded fellow in the society.

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* Hitchcock, John T. 1965, The Magars of Banyan Hill, Rinhart and Winston, U. S. A. p, 86.

Thus we notice that the traditional practices of these types have been playing a great and significant role in the village economy of the Dhimals. Furthermore, the Dhimal society is very rigid in maintaining their traditions and customs and these customs and usages have immensely influenced their way of life. In this way, they not only avail of their daily necessities, but also earn a good cash for buying other things.

The most important part of any economic system is control of expenditure. The Dhimals, though possess some lands, always aspire for getting loan. Why it is so, even if a man has land and the yields are good, that he has to mortgage his land or sell it ? The answer to this question is only one, 'that the Dhimal people are very extravagant, mainly in food and feasts. It is said that for ordinary families, there are two types of famines : "the first one starts from the month of **Chaitra** (March-April) and continues to **Srawan** (June-July) and the second from Kartik (Oct.-nov.), and lasts upto the middle of the month of Marga (Nov.-Dec.). In this way, there is poverty and famine for 5 months for the Dhimal people. Though the land here is alluvial and the yields are more, approximately about 25 quintals per 0.3306 acres, even then they are starved. It is only because they take loan in advance at a high rate of interest for cultivation and have to repay this by crops as soon as these are harvested, facing again the same type of starving condition every year. Moreover, often they have to purchase bullocks and for incidental expenditures, they take such loans, which they usually repay by crops.

The life of the Dhimals is influenced greatly by their traditional culture and institutions. If we, therefore, study any aspect of the Dhimal society without studying their culture, that will be just a fractional and incomplete study. So the expenditures they incur for religious festivals and other day-to-day needs have been ascertained to give a fuller picture of their social and cultural life. Individual and family expenditures in daily life are supplemented reciprocally by goods, services and recreational facilities they receive instead. This has been done to project properly their cultural background and economic system.

Daily expenses :

The essential commodities for daily life are–rice, millet, lentil, salt, oil, vegetables and fuel. Rice and lentil are generally grown by them. So they do not buy these. But salt, oil, clothings (for men) have to be purchased from outside. All these materials are generally purchased from the weekly markets. In most cases, men go for marketing. Some-times their wives accompany them. Most of the young boys and girls are foppish and fashionable these days and hence their clothings are bought by them from market, and are a bit costly. The Dhimals are very fond of meat and fish and they go to the market occasionally to purchase these. The middle-class people are found, to visit the market more frequently than the rich. Since the middle class people have the habit of purchasing the essential commodities only occasionally according to their necessity, they have to go to the market frequently. The rich people are, however, found to purchase such essential items for three to four months at a time. Young boys of the wealthy families are fond of fashionable drese. So it is seen that most part of their income is spent for clothings. But young men of the middle class and of poor families cannot afford to spend much money for clothings. They domesticate pigs in every house. So for meat, there is no problem. One good pair of pig is generally sold by them at about Rs. 800/—in the market. The money thus obtained, is utilised for purchasing a little qnantity of meat and other essential items at the time of need. They buy small pig for domestication only and sell the bigger ones. Liquor is also made in the house by them, and is an item of daily consumption.

Expenditures on Festivals and Ceremonies :

In comparison to other communities of this area, the Dhimals have kept up their cultural entity in a more enthusiastic manner, as is seen from the festivals they observe, Their way of life is also maintained at a higher level in the same manner. Almost all men and women are in the habit of drinking liquor, which they prepare in their house, The drinking reaches the peak level during tihar (Aushi Festival). The people then indulge in drinking from early morning and continues it upto mid-night. If we critically examine their nature of festivals, it will be found that liquor and pig's meat are the 'must'.

They spend quite liberally during the festivals like, Sirijat, Dhang Dhange Mela, Naubangi Puja or Parba. On these occasion, every family contribute as much as it can, according to the custom and its status.

Sirijat Puja and Dhang Dhange Mela occupy a special place in their social culture. These worships are held in most of the Dhimal settlements. It is celebrated from the month of Jestha (May-June) to Ashar (June-July). This is a community festival. So its expenses are met by collective contributions. Every household must compulsorily contribute Rs.10/–, irrespective of their economic condition. The money thus collected is utilised for the purchase of goats, pigs, fowls and pigeons, to offer as sacrifice to their principal deities like, Dharma thakur, Sasmi, Maikhola, etc.

Besides this, every family spends more on such occasions according to their economic condition. An ordinary Dhimal must provide about half quintal of firewood to his parent-in-law, village headman, and Dhami, on this occasion. In return, he gets a good meal from each of them. The custom is that everybody must spend some money in these festivals. The extent of expenditure is always greater than the social and economic condition of the families, as it entails the question of prestige and is made liberally. Rich and prestigious families are seen to spend lavishly to show their weatth and social status.

When the worship is completed, the village people in groups, visit, every house, and they are presented an earthen pot full of beer or a bottle of wine by of each family. In this case, every family has to contribute about Rs. 20/– for the community feast. Since Sirijat is a great festival, each family prepare pig's meat individually and take liquor and food profusely incurring a large expenditure. Guests and relatives are also invited, and this enhances the expenditure more. For this generally, Rs. 250/– is kept apart for entertaining guests. Thus the total expenditure per family on this occasion amounts to Rs. 350/– on an average, irrespective of the economic condition of individual families, creating further economic disparity among the people.

Expenditure of Naubangi Puja :

This worship is also held collectively in the month of Marga (November). This is also celebrated by contributions collected from all the families of the village. In this ceremony, village deities, household gods and ancestors are propitiated and offered food. This is a common ceremony and is held before the eating of the newly harvested crops. Animal sacrifice is offered to them, and the dedicated food is then distributed to the family members. It costs about Rs. 60/– for each family.

Expenditure of Parba or Aoushi Puja :

This is the chief family festival of Dhimal Society. It is celebrated on the day of Dewali Festival of the Hindus and is called Tihar in Nepal, as also by the Dhimals. In this ceremony also, animal sacrifice is offered to family gods, Kali, Devi, and ancestral spirits. Then a feast is given with liquor to friends and relatives. Preparation for this celebration begins a month earlier. Every Dhimal family has to spend about Rs. 200/– for this, there by imbalancing their domestic economy.

Expenditure of other family festivals and functions :

Though the Dhimals do not celebrate the Hindu festivals like, Durga Puja Makar Sakranti etc, these days they have been influenced by these and eat special food, as their higher caste Hindu friends do.

They celebrate 'Holi' like the Rajbanshis, Tharus and the Satar communities of the tarai. Besides this, on the first day of Baisakh (April/may)New Years Day of Nepal, they go out for picnic. This is called 'Siruwa by the Dhimals. On this day, many Dhimals go for hunting, as they believe that on this day, games will be easily available.

Even these people have started celebrating Satyanarayan puja and other Hindu worships, secularising them gradually. In all these festivals, they have to spend about Rs. 50/—every year.

Expenses for agricultural activities :

The Dhimal families have some contractual and 'Jajmani' relations with some artisan castes of the village. The traditional modes of exchange for payment to labours are in vogue. In the Dhimal society, these include both contract and status relations (Maine, 1861). The more closer relations are those between the Dhimal farmers as food-producing families and blacksmiths and tailors supplying them with goods and services of their respective trades. Besides blacksmiths and tailors, the Dhami of the village also serves them and gets corn for his service for the welfare of the village communities. These days, this practice has changed and he is paid in cash instead of corn. This shows that the Dhimals give more importance to the utilatarian aspect in regard to the contract with the blacksmiths and tailors. Since they get lesser service from the Dhami, and he is called only when there is any natural calamity or epidemic disease in the village, he does not get a high remuneration.

During the investigations it was found that every family has to incur an additional expenditure of Rs. 150/—annually to pay for such contractual services.

Expenditure on gifts :—

Customarily the Dhimal people have to attend without fail the marriage ceremonies of their friends and relatives, on invitation. Gifts or presentation in the form of liquor, cash and 'bona' (clothes) are made during the marriage ceremony of a girl. Due to influence of other ethnic groups, they have even started to present utensils of stainless steel now-a-days. On this account also, each family has to spend about Rs. 50/—every year.

Economic hardships :

The agricultural products are used for two purposes Firstly, it is used as food in the household and, sceondly sold for cash earning. Other indirect sources of income, such as, hunting, fishing, Hauli, ease their daily expenditure to some extent, though no cash is earned by these. Some Dhimal women sell rice, paddy, puffed-rice, vegetables, garlic, turmeric and liquor. But it is not their regular source of income. So it can be said that agricultural earning is only the direct source of income of this community. Generally a Dhimal family produces, on average, 7 quintal of paddy. They use this as daily food, and thus consume about 5 quintal of rice, The remaining 2 quintals are sold in the market to meet other incidental expenses like, buying salt and clothings. Their main expenditure is on food stuffs in comparison to their expenditure on clothings. This is the general pattern of expenditure among the Dhimals. Most of the families' budget thus runs into deficit. Only there are a few families who can earn some more cash and are thus becoming richer and richer every day.

When we project the whole economic organization of a Dhimal family, we see that almost the whole family takes loan from other sources in order to maintain their wretched hand-to-mouth existence. The chain of festivals and ceremonies, hospitability and offering of good meals to guests on ceremonial occasions, and drinking habit have thrust on them more expenses. The land kept in mortgage and high interest paid for this loan, aggravates their economic life further. Most of the expenditures are found to be incurred for the celebrations of their cultual festivities. At present the prices of all commodities are rising higher and higher every day, and so the cost of animals purchased for sacrifice are much higher than what they were previously. Though expenditures are increasing, they are not attempting to cultivate their land and produce more crops by means of scientific methods and techniques. In this way, on the one hand, thay are not trying to increase agricultural production, and on the other, are spending lavishly for feasts and festivals, there by facing rigid economic hardship and incurring more and more debts. Furthermore, their cultural traditions and usages are rigidly followed and the prices of materials used in these have increased alarmingly, causing further distress to them. Population is also increasng at a high rate, thus exerting additional pressure on their economy, which is almost on the verge of a break-down. On the other hand, it is seen that a few richer families have become still richer and have become owners of rice-mills, service holders and proprietors of small business.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

In Damak, Brahmins are the most numerous groups (36·36 percent). Next in order comes the Chhetry group (16.54 percent) followed in third position by Dhimal (11.06 percent). Lastly, then come the community groups of Limbu, Newar, Magar, Rai, Tamang. Kumal, Gurung, Majhi, and Tharu. The Dhimal society has a cultural identity and is considered as a separate ethnic group, like the Tharus, Danuwars, Rajbanshi and a most of other tarai people, as mentioned in the book 'People of Nepal' by D. B. Bista (1972). They claim similarity with the ethnic groups like Rais and Limbu groups. Though their cultural traditions are somewhat similar to those of the Limbu, but in practice the differences are more pronounced. By their cultural traditions and standards, they seem more like cross-offsprings of Limbu and Rai groups. No sub-caste is found in the Dhimal society. The Dhimals distiugnish themselves as settlers of eastern and western Jhapa. But this is merely a geographical division, rather than cultural one. It is true that the Dhimals are more influenced culturally by the Rajbanshis, which is, amply noticed, as one moves towards east from Damak to the far eastern border of Jhapa. Dhimals Claim to be the first and original inhabitant of this area. They are very proud of it. Their claim is supported and accepted by late commers. They claim that their knowledge of topography, ecology and technique of cultvation was adopted by other communnities. The position of Dhimal society, as honest, simple tenants and agriculturist is well known. The communities of Rai, Limbu, Magar, Gurung, Tamang., kumal. Tharu, Majhi and Rajbanshi put Dhimal as in their own ladder of social status. Karna Bahadur, Dhimal of Damak believes and says" Dhimals and we were accidently separated in remote past. Dhimal settled down in the (plains) and we settled in the mountains. Later, we started migrating when malaria was eradicated."

In Dhimal villages social relations between its members are the factors of cohesion and adjustments, disputes and harmony, love and hatrate. In their social structure, their kinsmen have been constantly making strife to unite the people and provide them strength by sharing and performing several roles and duties. They try to live in harmony, not only with their kutumba (kinsmen) but also with other neighbours, creating a friendly atmosphere.

Dhimals are given loan by them of an on and engaged to cultivate their lands on share cropping basis by these Brahmins Chhetries. Even in Panchayat election, Brahmin and other hill people are supported by the Dhimals and some of them have won the election. But everybody in the society is not able to do it. Hence there is keen competition to attain higher status through political social activities. In reality such competitions seems to have generated due to personal envy and jealousy. The villages like Dogare, Jambujhar, Adiamal and Arnakhadi were in the dense forest past. A few families had only settled there. When helpers were needed they asked some landless Dhimals to go there and cultivate their land. Gradually more forest areas were thus cleared, increasing the size of the land of these men. The labour again brought some persons to live there. Thus every year, the population of these villages increased, and the need was felt to produce and provide more and more food. Thus the later settlers who had no land became 'Hali' (Share-cropper) of the former. He had to cultivate the lands and got only a fixed share of grains to meet his family needs.

The basis of social relations between a Dhimal and a Brahmin is reflected in the pattern of difference which symbolises their respective status. The manner in which greetings are exchanged mirrors the relative status of the persons meeting together. Unless they are kinsmen, when specific forms of address or gestures are used, it is usual for a subordinate to incline his forehead in front to be 'tapped' by the other subordinate caste elder. The criteria of relative status are not easy to discern. Between members of the same caste, they are usually a combination of wealth and age. Across caste lines, specially with Brahmin, Chhetry however, ritual rank is an important criterion and so the Dhimals are always the subordinate 'greeting-partners of Brahmins.' The same patterns applies to verbal forms of address. Brahmins use the lowest 'honorific grade' which an elder generally uses to a junior, when addressing Dhimals, regardless of their relative ages.

The Dhimal society is accepted by some communities like, Rajbanshi, Majhi, Tharu etc, in the same line of their social position, irrespective of their economic condition. The tailors (Darji) are considered as inferior to Dhimals. The status of Dhimals is, therefore higher than the tailors.

In traditional villages, tailors have the traditional relationship with the Dhimals in the form of 'Jajmani with their employees. The tailor is provided a share of agricultural products by the Dhimals for his services.

However, contrary to the situation In India, in Damak, this 'Jajmani relationship' involves just a small number of services. But when the clothes are stitched, they are given some amount of paddy or cash.

The Dhimal youths have become fashionable these days and go to Damak market, where there are dozens of tailors to stitch their clothes and make modern outfits. In some places tailors work as barber also. Though the Dhimals do not look down upon tailors as untouchables, they are very much conscious of their inferior social status.

Dhimal society is mainly an agricultural group They have to depend completely on blacksmiths for frequent repairs of their agricultural implements. Blacksmiths were paid by rice (about half quintal) for providing one plough. But these days, they are paid cash because now the Dhimals could sell their paddy in the markets. One or two rupees is paid for repairing charges of smaller agricultural implements.

By nature and psychologically, the Dhimals prefer to have their settlements built up separately. They would not like it if other caste people settle near their habitations. But in the present context and situation, the population has increasrd much, and migration and selling and buying of lands are so regular that in the villages like, Dogare and Dapgachi, once two densely populated settlements of Dhimals, are now inhabited mostly by the hill people. In most villages, other caste people are found to be settled in the periphery of Dhimal settlements. In the village festivals, some of the people from Hindu castes, and blacksmiths and tailors contribute money for the feasts and are found intermingling with the Dhimals. For such contacts, the Dhimals have assimilated all these new cultural traits, in varying degrees, in their cultural pattern. Some Brahmins would not take any food cooked by the Dhimals, while Majhi, Tharus, Rajbansi, Blacksmiths, Tailors and Cobblers unhesitatingly eat such food. Tailors and cobblers are not allowed to eat food with them. Their contribution is accepted, but they are kept at a 'social distance'. These factors have thus influenced the social relations between the various ethnic groups and the Dhimal society in several villages. Family is smallest social unit in the Dhimal society.

The ideal norm among the Hindus and many other communities specially in Nepal is the 'Joint family'. But in Dhimal society, the ideal norm is not the joint family but the nuclear family consisting of parents and unmarried children. The Dhimal famliy is composed of parents, mother, sons and daughters, and in a few cases daughter's husband and parents-in-law. Thus family among the Dhimals not only includes all consanguinal relatives, but also other 'kutumbas' or affines.

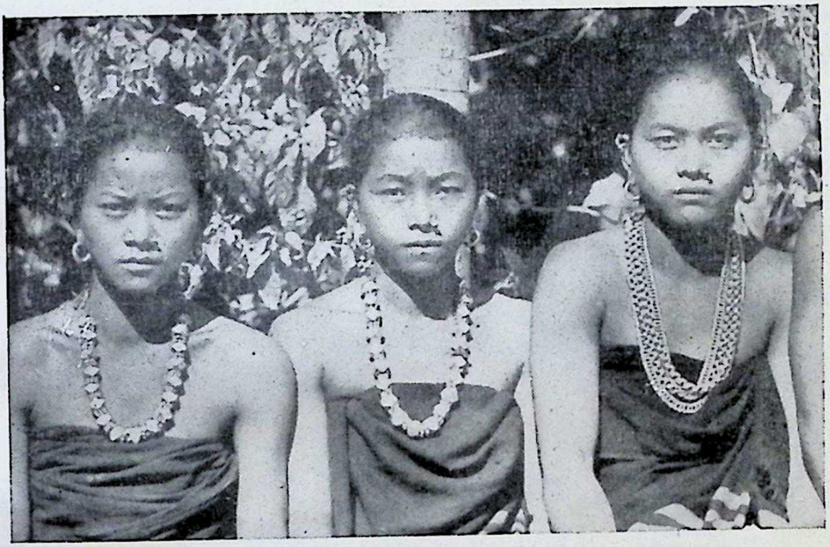
It is also an important socio-economic group. It consists of a members, who place their labour and property into a common fund and satisfy their needs from the turn-over of this fund. Moreover, all the members live together and use the same hearth for cooking when staying in the same village.

The members of a family usually reside, work, and eat together and thus the household or the family is the basic group of production and consumption, as well as the basic group of socialisation. Furthermore family or the household is the main property-holding group in the Dhimal society. Almost all the means of production, capital and labour are controlled by the family.

There are two types of families in the Dhimal society. viz. (i) Simple or nuclear and (ii) joint or extended family. In the census of 417 households made by the author, there were 322 simple families and 95 joint families. A simple family generally consists of parents and unmarried children. Besides this, widow or widower father and their unmarried children, occasionlly widow mother sister and daughters are also included in simple type of family.

Joint or extended families are extension of the simple families by lateral marriage, where one or more brothers live together with their respective families or vertically.

The following table 9 shows the types of families and population, as found among the Dhimals :—



Three Dhimal belle with traditional dress

Table 9

Types of families and population

	Simple family.	Joint family	Total
Numbers	322	95	417
Population	1620	1163	2783
Average percentage of the family members	5	12	

The population of 322 simple families surveyed consists of 1620 members, where as the other 95 joint families have a population of 1163 members.

It is generally said by the Dhimal people that the ideal type of family is joint family, but in practice, it is not found in many cases.

The following are the main causes for making of simple family and breakdown of joint families :—

(1) Marriage of Dhimal boys is performed at early age between 15-20 years. It is also customary that the bride will be elder by age. The wife, along with her husband live generally for two years jointly with the parents-in-law. Eventually they make a new house or separate household.

(2) The brothers get separated as soon as one of the parent die. Dhimal women are very tricky and they play the main role in breaking the joint familes. Moreover, if she comes from a rich family, then the process becomes rather too fast, as she is assisted by her parents in this game. There is a very popular proverb in Dhimal society, which states, "When one gets brother, he loses cow, when one gets cow, he loses his brother (Gai milda bhai mildaina, bhaimilda gai mildaina").

(3) Another factor for the brakdown of joint family is their poor economic condition. In such a family, when there are many members, they can not eat well and take proper care of their children. So, if any of them breaks the joint family for a new household, he does so to live more comfortably.

(4) Changed policy of His Majesty's Government of Nepal in the socio-economic sphere, introduction of land reforms first in this area, fixing the ceiling of land-holding per family to 25 bighas (8.265 acres) etc. are the other factors which have brought changes in their family types.

(5) Some are also separated because of serving else where and due to inter-caste marriage, which the Dhimal society does not approve.

The Dhimal society is patrilineal. Every family is ruled by the males. The descent is through the male line. The son is supposed to inherit the property as well as to perform all sorts of rites and rituals form birth to death. Though the women do not enjoy as much rights as the men in the community, the female head or the mother looks after all domestic affairs.

It appears from the survey that traditional preference among the Dhimal people for the simple or nuclear family is primarily a product of social and economic consideration, rather than a function of ecological consideration.

In Damak settlements, the composition and size of the family is moderately high though the trend is gradually towards smaller and smaller. Table 10 shows the categorisation made for the purpose of study is given below :—

Table 10

Size of the Family according to number of Persons.

Number of Persons	Number of Families	Percentage
1	3	.71
2	17	4.07
3-5	136	32.38
6-8	158	37.88
9-11	86	20.88
12-16	15	3.59
16 and above	2	0.47
Total	417	100.

As already mentioned, numerically simple family dominates over the jonit family. The present trend in Dhimal society is towards breaking down of the Joint family.

Above table1o shows that out of total 417 families, 37.88 percentage has 6-8 number of persons. Next to it, 32.38 percentage of the family has 3-5 persons. 20.88 percentage only has 9-11 persons in it. There is only 3.59 percentage where the number of persons are between 12-16. There are only two largest families which has 16 persons of more. Thus the pattern in the Dhimal society confirms the tendency of breaking up of joint families.

The causes of breakdown are that a mother cannot be cast off, one of the children supports her after the father's death, but in a few cases, as in the case of Fiste Dhimal of Chadak Pada, the married elder brother Himse supports him who is unmarried. Since age at marriage is considerably low, by the time a Dhimal dies, he sees to it that his daughters are married off. And since, widows in most cases stay with their in-laws, they are not found as sticking in their parental families. The property is divided almost immediately after the father's death and the brothers set up their new homes separately. This tendency to split up comes mainly from the economic disability of the villagers. The land resource remaining the same, the population has increased to a great extent in the last two decades.

Clan and Gotra :

The Dhimal society, according to many informants have ten patrilinial descent groups, which they call as **dhas** (ten) Dhimal groups. There are 13 exogamous patrilineal clans and 11 sub-clans within the Damak Settlements, as shown below :—

Donge Dhing Tegre Talipa Hardia Nunia Lem-Bang—Rat K T
bang liety La-hum a h
Talipa Bangmali Cholmali ter s a
Ding Raj Ding a r
r u

Ding Donge   Raj Donge   Simal Donge   Laxmi Donge   Nunia Donge   Hardia Donge

These clans are subdivided into sub clans which are also exogamous units. Marriage is permissible between these clans, but marriage among the same clans was found to occur in some cases. In the past, the Dhimal society was not particular in observing this restriction, but these days, specially after 1970's, they do not marry a spouse of the same clan group.

All the Dhimal clans can be distinguished clearly during the time of death ceremony. Each clan belonging to similar groups must be present during disposal of the dead and in mortuary rites and pay tribute by offering a hen in the name of the dead.

Clan of a man can also be distinguished during the time of burying the dead. For example, bark of the Simal Silk cotton tree (Bombax) must be burried along with the dead body among the Ding clan. The Hardia clan smears turmeric on the dead body. Some clan members are also tabooed to eat some foods and fruits. For instance, the clan members are tabooed to take turmeric and wild fruits or Amla. However, these are not their clan totems. It is said that in the past, descent was recognised through the mother's line, as it is still found among the Kochele clan. Kochele was a female, who taught Arjun dhami, and he took his descent through her mother. But now-a-days, descent is recognised only through the father's side. One descended from his father's clan is called **'hara'** or **'hakwali'** (who can inherit the property). The Dhimal people claim that each clan has its own deity, they call it 'pitri' or 'Jourage' (ancestral god). In fact, however, they have no clear conception about this.

The Dhimals too have no clear idea about 'Gotra'. When they talk with Hindu castes, they claim to have two types of **'gotra'** Kashi and Lasha. Their 'gotra' has no relation with any person or animal or totem, but these are mere linking with two geographical areas—as Kashi (Varanasi) and Lasha, the cap-married elder brother Himse supports him who is unmarried. Since age at marriage is considerably low, by the time a Dhimal dies, he sees to it that his daughters are married off. And since, widows in most cases stay with their in-laws, they are not found as sticking in their parental families. The property is divided almost immediately after the father's death and the brothers set up their new homes separately. This tendency to split up comes mainly from the economic disability of the villagers. The land resource remaining the same, the population has increased to a great extent in the last two decades.

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Talipa Bangmali Cholmali

Ding Raj Ding

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It is not easy to place the Dhimals in the Hindu caste system. Divisions of people, according to their occupations, are not done here. No distinctions are made among Dhimal people regarding taking Kachha (uncooked) and Pukka (cooked) food, from their other groups and sub-groups. Since they are equally treated, food and water is taken by every villager from any one of the above groups, irrespective of his social status. But due to the process of gradual acculturation, wealth and political power have come to play their role now. The people of such categories consider themselves as higher in rank and do not accept food everywhere.

Considerations of secular status, howevr, can lead to the widening of commensal rules, such as, acceptance of every ritually unimportant foods from the Dhimals. But such cases were not found. Some Brahmins, for example, seeking to retain their high secular status, insist that commensal prohibitions be extended to all types of food. Such attempts to restrict all commensal interaction are often the cause of bitterness and resentment among the Dhimals and other castes like, Limbus.

The kinship system of the Dhimal people is a relatively wider one, both horizontally and vertically. In this, the author has used the term 'descent', when dealing with the kinship system of the Dhimal Society, as Social Anthropologists use it, to describe societies with corporate lineal groups (Campbell, 1964), and this will, therefore, not lead to any confusion. People in the Dhimal settlements acknowledge kinship relationships from ancestors of both sexes, and there are corporate groups.

The informants interviewed, could go back only to the level of their grand-parents and almost no body had any knowledge or memory of their great-grand-parents. Only two or three people could remember anything about them, and that only in a vague form. On the horizontal level, recognition extends to cousins, specially first and second, after which, the relationships tend to fade out; people beyond third cousin range or more being called 'distant relatives'. One of the informants said this as follows : 'But even when they are dead, we pay homage to their memory. In the people who are alive...in the first place are the parents; in the second place, brothers and sisters; in the third place, the grand-parents; after that-first cousins, then-second and distant relatives,-that is the others." Generally within these limits, kinship is recognised in the Dhimal society. They meet their relatives on many occasions, who live within the limits of their settlements.

The Dhimals have a patrilineal society. Every family is dominated and ruled by the males. The inheritance is formally unilateral. Traditionally, a woman cannot inherit, although some of the villagers now follow the Nepalese national law, which entitles an unmarried daughter over 35 years of age, to a share of her father's ancestral property. Men without sons or close lineage brothers, may pass their property on to daughters by local customary law. Residence pattern may be patrilocal. Elder brothers generally set up separate households with their share of the property, within a few years after marriage, while the youngest brother generally stays with his parents and inherits the house.

So, we find that like every other society, the Dhimals also make double-categories of kinship based on consanguinal relationship and affinal relationship.

Father, uncle, son, grand-sons, brothers and cousins come under the category of 'blood relation'. Maternal uncle, wife's brother and sisters and husband's or wife's parents, come under the affinal relation. There is also a third category of relation (kinship), which is created by adopting sons or daughters, and entering into a friendly bond with some one under the witness of the people of the society. They regard blood-relation as the strongest form of relations. That is why uncle is regarded as nearer than the maternal uncle.

They have different terms to address relatives. They can recall their ancestry as far back as 'five generations and place of their residence, and name their relations, but not so easily. Sometimes, terms of designating kinship appear to be confusing. However, the relations are recognised without much difficulty.

In the case of actual social contacts, the system is fully bilateral, as a glance at the composition of the household shows. Contacts are maintained with relatives on either sides, and no discrimination is made in terms of address or behaviour; and as many degrees of relationships are recognised on the father's side, as on the mother's side. The actual number of relatives and the degree of contact with them is determined by the amount of actual intercourse and not by formal principles. This does not mean that there are no principles, but only the principles do not emphasise one side at the expense of the other.

These are the general features of the kinship system. The author would now go into the details of kinship relations, taking 'Ego' as the base.

Ego' s own generation :

Strong emphasis is given by the Dhimals on harmony and cooperation between full-siblings. The element of respect is found in their behaviour, in regard to age and sex difference. Brothers should protect their sisters and avoid certain types of contacts between them. They do not come into any physical contact. nor a brother remains at the place when his sister is in a naked or semi-naked condition. People emphasise this sort of special treatment of respect for the sister by stating: "You have relations of blood and trust (biswas) with your brothers and sisters, but the trust is a bit different, when you are dealing with your sister." Relations between brothers are very close and enduring and do not end with their marriage. Brothers usually help each other and the elder keeps a close watch and takes care of the younger brothers. Emphasis is placed on the fact of both being the "Children of the same father and mother", meaning by this-full siblingship. Although it is asserted that (in few cases), half-siblings are treated in the same way as full siblings, there seems in practice to be a slight difference in be aviour and in the degree of contact and co-operation between them.

Relations with cousins reflect the bilateral character of kinship. People stated very frankly that cousins on either side are treated and addressed in the same way, and added that 'between a sibling and a cousin, there is a big difference in trust, co-operation and degree of intimacy, though some cousins could become almost like brothers by their dealings and consistency. With a brother and sister, you have more confidence than with a cousin-they emphasised.'

Beyond the first-cousin relationship, the degree of contact and social intercourse with more distant kins is minimal or non-existant in some cases. The fact that the Dhimal society in their semi-nomadic phase permitted third-cousin marriage, demonstrates the narrow character of this link of relationship. First and second cousins usually do not marry each other, and there is additional reluctance to do so, as some people state that the marriage between such relatives makes the offsprings mentally defective and deformed, and is considered as a crime in their society.

First ascending generation from Ego :

Relation with the father and mother is permeated by mutual love and paying respect, and submission to their authority. A child must realise and recognise that his father is the head of the house (if he is alive) and that he commands overall authority and respect in the family. This is the basic tone of their relationship. The mother by contrast, can be more lenient. The mother plays a vital role between the father and the children. Children should also respect the mother, but it is not the same type of respect, as for the father. With father, it is both fear, love and obedience; with mother, it is love and trust. Relations with aunts and uncles are again equally balanced on both sides. They are seen as secondary fathers and mothers, and as such, are treated with similar respect. But in the past, relations with father's side was more intimate, and as reverent as that with one's own parents, than with mother's side. There is less restraint in this relation, and a restricted joking relationship is permitted. Jokes can be made between aunt-neice, but not between uncle-nephew. But these jokes are not as personal as they would be, for example, between friends. It is always emphasised that the aunt and uncle are the siblings of the parents. These are the consanguinal relations, related with each-other through blood ties and descent from common ancestors.

Second ascending generation from Ego .

Many of the informants in practicc, did not know their grand-parents on either side, or had only a very vague memory of them. Those who knew and came into contact with them described their relationship with them as a 'mixture of respect and affection'. There is the presence of joking relationship between grand-children and grand-parents. If you have a married child in your house, there will also be at least one or two grand-chindren, and they be may spoilt by the grand-parents by pampering and occasional crude jokes.

The terms of address are definite and vary in relatiou to the marital status, age, generation and sex of the person.

Cousins are called 'cousin' (Pisaichan and Chamindi).

The father is addressed as 'father' (**Aaba**) and his name is not used as 'Ji'. The mother is addressed as 'mother' (**amai**) in a similar way. The terms of address used for uncles and aunts are '**Aka**' and '**Ate**'. Grand-parents are addressed by the relationship term, but in a diminitive form, such as, '**Aju**' or '**Ajai**'. It seems, there is hardly any terms to address people with no kinship or other ties in the community. The system is unable to handle the problem of how to address strangers.

In Dhimal kinship terminology, wife's brother is more respeeted than sister's husband The kinship terminology of the Dhimal society is more classificatory than deseriptive.

The meaning of kinship in Dhimal society :

It is very interesting to isolate and address the influence of kinship—on the system of social relation in the Dhimal society. It tends to fuse with other factors, such as, neighbours and fictitious friendship (relations called 'meeteri). But there is perhaps one thing that isolates kinship from these other two factors. In Dhimal society, people say that with kin you can have more trust than with neighbours. One of the informants, Mangal, put it in this way :

"Well, to have kin, is a very nice thing and beneficial, because in case one sees a kin in need, one is obliged to help him before helping any body else." Kins are the first social bond; then come others. You can trust a kin more, because he is akin to your blood and would instinctively stand by you.

In certain situations, kinship becomes specially helpful. In cases of sickness, death, financial misfortune and celebration of marriage and festival, kins are supposed to give active assistance, If there is a sick person, it is the duty of the kin to look for the **Ojha** or **Dhami** or doctor, to arrange for treatment. If somebody dies, they are expected to make all the arrangements for the funeral. If there is some financial misfortune, they must give their help. Siblings will participate more actively and with more interest than first and second cousins, as they are nearer to the ego.

The extent to which kins are in contact with one another, apart from the special occasions which bring them together, depends on the distance they live from each other. The sons of the Dhimal lived very near and their father used to go to their houses almost daily to check up, if everything was all right. But when two brothers live at a distance, say a mile and a half apart, they would see each other less frequently, perhaps once a week, axcept in emergencies.

Affines :

The terms of address are definite and vary in relation to the marital status, age, generation and sex of the person concerned. People in Dhimal settlements classify the affines as kins, but they distinguish between kin by marriage and kin by blood. Relations between affines are permeatted by respect and harmony. They are expected to avoid conflict even more than blood relations. There is more restraint, less intimacy and co-operation between affines than between consanguinal kins.

Affinal kins are those individuals who are related with each other through the marital relation in the Dhimal society. The affinal kins of father consists of sister's husband, sister's son, sister's daughter, father's sister's husband, father's sister's son and daughters. There are also affinal kins from mother's side. Most notable members are mother's brother, mother's sister, mother's father and mother's mother. There are affinal kins or one's own side. Husband and wife are the most notable kins of this group. Kins of married sons and daughters like, son-in-law, daughter-in law, mother-in-law and wife's brother and sister are included in this group. Besides this, as already mentioned, there are relations with other persons in **'meeteri saino'** (as fictitious bond of friendship) related through mutual friendship, behaviour and reciprocity. They may be of same community, but generally of other caste groups.

Relations between affines are perceived as more distant than relations between kins by blood. But this situation in some cases is modified by actual social intercourse. It is probable that relations between many affines are formal and restrained at first, but that with experience and contact through the years, the relationship becomes less formal in character. The general impression of the author of the Dhimal society is that – this is so, specially in the case of affines who live under the same roof or who meet often.

The son-in-law cannot cut jokes with his father-in-law and mother-in-law. There is always some sort of distance between them. The relation is based on respect. Son-in-law can joke with his wife's sister (Sali).

The significant difierence from consanguinal kinship is that while the relation with one's parents in Dhimal society is based on respect, there is also an element of affection in it, particularly in the case of mother. One respects one's father, but one loves his mother more. The affective element predominates over respect, a situation that is impossible in the case of affines. One may come to like them more as affines, but love them not as consanguinal kins. The situation is similar with a brother or sister-in-law. They are, or could become like siblings, but well never be siblings. They are not a thing of blood-tie. But there is a tendency of relations or co-operation (based on respect) to be established between affines. So it is seen that respect is the essence of affinal relations in

Dhimal society, while co-operation is the essence of consanguinal kinship.

Kinship and Inheritance :

At large, the Dhimal society is patrilineal. Inheritance is through the male lines, though unmarried daughter over 35 years of age can claim a share of her father's ances, tral property.

The transfer of the paternal property can take place at different times and in different ways, but the result is always that all sons with a legal right share the property equally among themselves.

The Dhimal man does not necessarily need to retire before his property can be passed on to his sons, when he wishes, it can even de divided before he is retired (normolly people retire after 60 years).

The first step in the division of ancestral property is to make up any inequalities in amounts the sons have received from the parents. The next step is to placc a part of the property aside for marriage of unmarried sons and daughters, including 'jiwuni'–some amount of property, land share kept for security for old age for parents. Finally, the remainder is divided in one of the two ways mentioned below :–

1) There can be made as many equal shares as there are sons, plus one extra share for the parentss, The share of the parents generally includes the house. After the division of property, parents commonly stay in a joint household with their youngest son, who now represents the household politically and socially. The share of the parents is written down and later utilised for covering the expenses of their death ceremonies. Little remains then of the original estate to be divided among the sons. Conventionally, the sons should divide the remains equally.

2) The paternal property can also be divided in another way. In this instance, these are made into as many shares as there are

sons, and parents keep only a few necessities including their clothes and ornaments. The sons divide the ancestral property equally among themselves, but the youngest usually gets a bigger share, including the house, if he has stayed for a long time in a joint household with the parents. After the division of their property, the parents will maintain a separate household in the house of their youngest son. The sons are obliged, usually in writing to provide their parents with foodstuffs and friewood, and also to cover the expenses of their parents' death ceremonies.

The property of a man who dies before his property has been transfered, is passed on to his sons in different ways according to their age. The property is passed on to the sons undivided, if none of the sons have left the natal household. The property will then only be divided, when one of the sons leaves the natal household and establishes his own. On the otherhand, the property is divided among the sons after their father's death, if one or more sons have already established their own independent households. In this case, the son still staying in the natal household merge their property rights and form one single househeld.

A widow has the right of inheriting her husband's property. She may stay in an independent household generally with the youngest son.

Any man can make a written will, if he wants his property to be divided in a special way. It may that a man wants his youngest son to get a bigger share than the other sons, because he stayed for many years in a joint household with the youngest son; it may be that a man without sons wants her daughter to get a share of his property; or it may be that a man wants to be sure that sufficient amount of land is set aside for the marriage of his unmarred daughters.

There are no limits to what can be included in a will. But on the other hand, there is no rule that the wishes of a will have to be fulfilled. In case of conflict, representatives from the patrilineal descent group of the **deceased** and the village community decide how the property shall be divided,[卐]

The general rule is that property shall be divided equally among the sons entitled to a share. It will thus not be accepted, if a particular son gets significantly less than that to which he is entitled. The representatives will accept the wish that the youngest son shall have more property, because he has stayed longer in a joint household than the other brothers. They will, however, see to it that the extra property which the youngest son gets is in reasonable relation to the time he has spent in the joint household. They will also accept that a part of the movable property is spent according to particular wishes of the **testator**. For example, a man's will might state that half of his property shall be given to the local school. In that case, it may be decided that the sons shall keep and share equally all the immovable properties. Movable properties will first be used to cover expenses for the death ceremonies and the remaining movable properties will then be distributed, according to the will. Usually, there is not much left after the expenses of the death ceremonies are paid. The representatives will then advise the sons to save some money and spend it according to the wishes of the will at a later date.

According to Dhimal tradition, daughters have no right to ancestral property. Here the Dhimal tradition agrees with the Nepalese law. In recent years, especially in connection with the International Women's Year in 1975, there have been minor changes concerning woman's right to inherit. These changes, however, have had little impact. A married woman still has no right to ancestral property, if she has any brother.

[卐] There is also the possibilty of appeal to the representatives of the Nepalese Government to resolve the conflicts according to the Nepalese Law, but this is only seldom done.

The property of a man without sons according to their tradition, is inherited by his close patrilineal relatives, usually by his brothers or their sons.

Range of Kinship :

It will become clear from the above discussions that both sides of a person's kinship-framework are the yard-sticks by which the kinship is reckoned; no discrimination is made between the parternal side. When one uses the term 'kin' (**Kutumba**), both sides are implied. This extends in theory as far back as the great-grand-parents, but in actual practice, only to the grand-parents, as few people can remember their great-gaand-parents.

Every member of the social system of the Dhimal society comes to know and to interact with this kinship frame-work, created by the marriage of his father and mother, his brothers, sisters and their children. One is fully conscious of this whole–configuration and in that sense, it is real, even if it cannot wholly be considered as a corporate group, because one has to take it into consideration in the whole process of social intercourse, inside and outside of the Dhimal society. Kins are kins, both in jural and in a moral sense.

Special Relations (Meeteri Sieno) :

A striking feature among the Dhimal socicty is the presence of 'fictive kinship', a bond of friendship ritually made, called 'Meeteri relationship'. This is a very special kind of relation, generally found between the Dhimals and other caste. Such relationship is found to be exist in between the hill-people and the Dhimals and between the Tharu coomunity and the Dhimals. According to Dhimals. they cannot have such relationship with their own kinsmen, as it is not allowed in their villages. Such persons are called 'Meetai' by them. This special bond of 'Meetai' kinship is also found among the women of the Dhimal society.

For forging such friendship, an auspicious date is fixed after they consult with each other. The ceremony is held before the witness of village panchayat members and other village notables. Two bottles of wine brought by these two persons are kept before the Panchas. The Village Panchas then say that these two bottles of wine have been brought here to get these two friends bound in 'fictive kinship relation'. One of the oldest man (barang) enchants some queer incantations and tells them not to envy each other and think of doing evil to either from now on. They should treat their children as father. Then they exchange a bottle of wine kept there, with each other. If they belong to wealthy families, they exchange costly gifts. The Dhimal society traditionally believe that such kind of special friendship is sacred. Many friends from the neighbouring districts and even from far away places like Darjeeling and Assam in India, visit them and request for forging such type of friendship. On such occasions, as they are habituated, guests are well-fed with special foods and drinks. The kinship address for male friend and female friend are—**'Param and Parami'** respectively in their language. Mourning for a day and avoiding salt for a day, is the rule, if such a friend dies in their social life.

Another special kind of relationship among the Dhimal society is to keep a young man as **'Ghar-jamai'** (**Mahachak**).

Ghar-jamai (Resident son-in-law):

Such a man is called as **'Mahachak'.** The man willing to live in his wife's parents' house as 'Mahachak' is not considered as the novice by Dhimal society. Generally 'mahachak' is kept in such a household where there are no sons but only a daughter. 'Mahachak' has to fulfil certain obligations before he is accepted by the house. He has to win the love of the daughter. For this he is given six months' time. He works laboriously as a servant too. In the matter of sex, if he has previous sex contact with this girl, he is refrained from doing so. During this provisional period, if he is found to be unfit, he is dismissed. But if he is liked by all the family members and is given a bottle of wine (gora), it means that he has been fully accepted. Now he is entitled to have sexual intercourse with his wife. Later on, arrangements for payment of marriage and feast expenses are made by him and he is formally taken as the member of the household. Now, he is also entitled to get a a share of his father-in-law's property. He can also form a separate household, if he so wishes. But it is not ordinarily possible, because of his moral obligation to the family of the bride and lack of means, in most of the cases.

Many of the informants stated that it is very difficult for a poor man to get a bride or wife in their society. So the system of 'Mahachak' is alllwod in some cases, to solve this problem, in two ways. Firstly, a young man finds out his own bride and secondly, the parent-in-law gets a strong young man for doing his household works and help him in various agricultural activities, without having to pay him.

This practice of keeping 'Mahahak' has an intimate relationship with the agricultural activities and solving labour problem, to some extent, and it partly gives us the clue that it is the covert arrangement of polygamy in the Dhimal society. Only one case of polygamy was found during the investigations:

Dhanguba Husband or Kulduba :

There is a third kind of peculiar system of kinship relationship fround in the Dhimal society. This is a system of keeping a husband not consanguinally related, by an old woman.

For this, an old widow has to pay 'rit' (marriage payment) to the man before the village Panchas and some important members of her society. The man willing to become **'Dhanguba** husband' sits before the witnesses and tear out the old **(Kandhani)** thread tied on his waist. After this, the widow ties a new

'Kandhani' made of silver around his waist and proclaims that he has thus become her husband. Then the man's head is shaved before the village witnesses.

The significance of tearing of the old 'Kandhani' is to say that he has left his original clan membership, there by adopting the clan membership of the widow. It is naturally not taken as a good system by the Dhimal society. So this system is called even 'Kulduba' (killing of one's clan) by the Dhimals.

'Dhanguba' husband is generally kept by the wealthy widows. This practice, although prevalent in the past, is very rare, at present.

An instance of 'Dhanguba husband' was found by the author in 1970 when he first visited the Dhimal villages. A man named 'X' became 'Dhanguba husband' of a rich woman 'Y' of the same village. The clan of the man was **'Nunia'** and that of woman—**'Talipa'**. When the man ritually became her husband, he took the clan of 'Talipa'. After this ritual, they became husband and wife. Both of them have died a year before.卐

Adoptes Son and Daughter :

The Dhimals, when necessary, adopt son and daughter from their own community, as far as possible. If none such is found

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卐 In the Dhimal society, changing of clan itself is detested. According to some informants, the change of clan is not essential. But the shaving of one's head (Tupi) and tearing of 'kandhani thread' indicates that they used to protest against such religious and social system existing in the Dhimal society. Keeping of 'Kandhani and Tupi (hair in the middle of the head) is still prevalent in Higher Hindu castes in Nepal. This practice indicates the influence of caste system among them. But on the other hand, keeping of 'Danguba husband' is not found among the Higher Caste Hindus of Nepal.

within their group, an orphan or poor helpless child is adopted from other groups. Any boy adopted from their community can be bought from his parents. This type of adopted son is called **'Cholchan'.** There is another type of adopted son brought through negotiation from his father, who is called 'Dharam Chan' by the Dhimal peasants. The adoption is done before the village Panchas through 'oath and rituals.' Drinks and foods are served on such occasion to the members of the Pancha. The adopted son is sometimes entitled to get share of the parental property. The boy once ritually adopted, is not allowed to fufil any cultural and ritual obligations for his own parents. This system of adoption is gradually disapearing, because of the economic, social and political changes in Nepal. Likewise, the adopted daughter too must be given all customary gifts and respect during her marriage. But this system is also becoming outmoded.

Sometimes in the past, the right of adopted boy to get share of the property of his original parents, is also used to be bought by the adopter from his parents. For instance, such a case was found in a village in Damak settlements where a boy's right to property was bought up by payment of about 100 kg. of rice to his father by the adopter. But social changes are taking place in the Dhimal society in manifold directions. As such, this system too is almost defunct now.

To whom to joke : Joking Relationship :

In Dhimal society, there are certain relationships, which allow its members to have joy of jokes, and other relationships, which does not allow to have jokes at all.

The following are the relationships between whom joking relationships are maintained :—

(1) Between wife's sister, brother and ego.

(2) Between married sister's husband's elder brother (Solti) and his wife and ego's brothers and sisters.

(3) Between grand-parents and grand-children.

(4) Between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

The jokings between brother-in law and sister-in-law cut across the social and moral bindings, as they are found to be using very vulgar words and discussing vulgar matters. These jokes are rampant in social festivals.

'Sali' of Dhimal man hinders the path when he tries to enter his wife's natal house on the day of marriage. **Sali** keeps old and torn-out sacks on the door, as a seat for him, and serves him a very poor dinner at the first night.[卐] These sisters-in-law jokingly abuse him. They call him 'Chidari and Joker' meaning torn-out dirty sack. He is, also abused with the word like 'Gundruk' (green vegetable-leaves decomposed and dried) and 'range' (he-buffalo).[卐卐]

Grand-parents and grand-children mostly joke about marriage. Grand-father jokes with grand-daughter saying that he would marry her. In answer, the grand-chilldren ask him to marry a fragile old woman of the village. These children joke with him by asking the grand-parent to go for fishing.[卐]

Husband's brother jokes with his sister-in-law saying that his brother will marry another woman.

Joking even cuts across the community. They even joke with their deities. During 'Sirijat Puja' they beat the drum (Dhol) and

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[卐] In Dhimal society, the guest must be offered good foods as rice, meat and drinks.

[卐卐] It is forbidden to eat a 'he-buffalo' in the Dhimal society.

[卐] Fishing by old men and women is ridiculous proposition. Fishing is the right of youths. To tell them to go for fishing means to ridicule the old persons in the Dhimal society.

ask their Chaumajhi and Budhathakur to marry Laxmi (the Goddess of Wealth).[卐卐]

Joking with parents-in-law, parents, sons and daughters, daughter-in-law (son's wife) is strictly prohibited. Sister's husband must talk with respect with his wife's elder sister and she should be treated as his mother-in-law.

Kinship Terminology in Dhimal language

English equivalent	Dhimal terms
Husband	Ke
Wife	Be
Elder brother	Dada
Younger brother	Bajan Oone
Elder sister	Bie
Sister-in-law	Bhauji
Son's wife	Nama
Younger sister's husband	Go
Father's sister's son	Pisaichan
Father's sister's daughter	Pisakichamindi
Maternal uncle's son	Mamaikochan
Maternal uncle's daughter	Mamai Chamindi
Solti-Soltini	Gouri
Meetai (ritual friend)	Param
Ritual friend's wife	Parami
Husband's sister	Hulme
Friend	Maya Sanaity

In ego's generation, relationships are distinguished only by means of pronouncitions.

Elder sister's husband	Go
Wife's brother	

[卐卐] According to Dhimal society, Laxmi is the wife of Choumajhi.

In the use of this term, the wife's brother is differentiated by adding 'Na' or 'Kya' (a sign of respect). The suffix of respect 'Na' or 'Kya' is not used in addressing sister's husband. This shows that the wife' s brother is respected more than the ego's sister's husband in the Dhimal society. The term 'Hulme' is used to address husband's sister and wife's sister.

Wife's brother's wife Husband's sister	Jimani
Married sister's husband's brother and his wife	Solti

But Solti cannot be used to address husband's brother, who has to be called 'Halunga'.

Brother-in-law	Sala
Sister-in-law	Sali
Sister	Bai
Husband's sister	Bai

Ego's first ascending generation :

Mother	amai
Mother's sister	mausi
Father	aba
Uncle	kaka
Aunty (uncle's wife)	ate
Father-in-law	juba
Moth er-in'law	jubai
Ego's father and wife's father	bihai
Ego's mother and wife's mother	behenee or Pisai
Father's sister's husband	Pesusa
Mother's brother's wife	mami
Mother's brother	mamai
Mother's elder sister and her husband Father's brother and his wife	boi

The terms for the relatives above father in male or female line is **boi**. The terms for the relatives above Ego's father is

'aju or ajai'.

Ego's first descending generation :

Son	chan
Dauther	chamindi
Son's wife	chan nama
Daughter's husband	chaminda mahawa
Adopted son	chan
Adopted daughter	dharam chamindi
Nephew	Pue or Pisai chan
Niece	Pue or Pisai chamindi
Elder brother's son	bhajija
Elder brother's daughter	vajiji
Sister's son	bhagina
Elder sister's daughter	bhagini

'Bodi' is used for those who are junior to Ego in age and social status. But the sister's son and daughters are not addressed as 'bodi'.

Like wife, 'Chu' is added to address the grand-sons or daughters of his own lineal group, and also for the sons and daughters of ego's maternal uncle and father's sister's children. Ordinarily 'bajan' is the suffix used to distinguish the sex of the relatives.

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CHAPTER SIX

VILLAGE OFFICIALS SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS AND OTHER RELATION

Today, if the Dhimal community is undergoing tremendous changes in their norms, values, customs and beliefs, they are also adopting these new values and customs by the impact of new needs and circumstnces. Even in such a state of change, the role and authority of the **Majhi** (village chief) and the **Dhami** (Priestly class) still continue traditionally and their directions followed in social and religious affairs, while the services of blacksmith (Biswakarma), tailor, tanner and barber, who belong to other caste groups, are accepted by them for meeting their social needs. In the past, they had no contact with these caste groups, because they were mere hunters and nomadic. But since contact and services of these communities were felt essential after the migration of these people to their locality from the hills, the Dhimal society has already accepted their role in their social life, since they needed such services. They are now accepting the role of **Panchas**, social-workers, etc., as the dignity and functions of the traditional role of Majhi are gradually dininishing.

In this context, the Dhimal society can be divided into three types of strata : (1) group, (2) castes in wider sense only, and (3) religious groups.

(A) Society of Dhimal Community.

(B) Other castes and their social ranks.

In every traditional village, there was a village headman, who was specially assigned the charge of protection and development of the village. In the Rais and Limbu community, the **Pagari** is known as their village chief. **Choudhary** was the village head in the Tharu society. Among the Rajbanshis, the village headman used to be called **Devania.**

In the Dhimal villages, the Majhi gets the respect of village chief. It is not well-known to them as to when this system of selecting village head (Majhi) started. But many informants stated that it was their very old tradition.

In this society, some social systems like, **Chourasi** and **Choumaji** (like caste council) used to have a strong hold until sometime back upto 1950. In such system, an important village chief called **Majhi** along with some youths and old-folk of the village used to be present to arbitrate on disputes. Though the **Majhi** had the sole authority, every other member of this institution (Chourasi and Choumajhi) could have his full say, to assist him to come to a decision. Such systems had full support and acceptance of the society along with vested judicial power. All kinds of cases, ranging from a simple domestic quarrel to theft, divorce, division of property, rape and murder were discussed and settled in such Councils previously.

The traditional of Majhi is inherited by some particular families even to these days. The custom of approaching the Majhi for his advice during celebration of festivals and settlement of disputes are still found in the Dhimal settlements. Minor cases of domestic affairs are still settled by the Majhi, older-folks and the Panchas. Though these old conventional values and norms were fully accepted until sometime back, they are losing their hold gradually.

Cases :

Shirlohanka, (Raising of head) :- This is the system where compensation is paid to the aggrieved according to the judgement of Majhi. This system is also followed by the Rais and Limbu communities of East Nepal. There are two types of 'Shirlohanka' in the Dhimal society :—

(1) In this process, when two persons have a dispute or quarrel and one insults or hurts the other, the aggrieved seeks such judgement. Some respected villagers are called by the Majhi for consultation. The aggrieved is paid or given a bottle of wine with cock before all, by the offender Then the wrong-doer raises his head before the village society, acknowledging his offence or guilt

2. **Rape** :– When a Dhimal commits rape forcibly of any woman, the Majhi has a right to award and enforce suitable punishment. On judgement, if the man is found guilty, he is made to touch the feet of the molested woman by his forehead before all the witnesses and beesech her pardon. In some cases, the man is made to pay as fine an amount of Rs. 15-to Rs. 30/—and a bottle of wine to the Panch. The man has to take a public oath that he would never again insult the woman in any way or do such crime, if he meets her again. In 1978, a young Dhimal Bom Bahadur of village Adiamal seduced forcibly, a young girl of 16, in the another village Jahada. They were caught red handed by two Dhimals who were passing by the bambo bush. The girl was crying and told them that she was coming from the near by forest after collecting fire woods. On the way, near the bambo bush Bomb Bahadur took her and raped.

Bom Bahadur as well as the girl Phulu was taken to the Telpane majhi of the village Arnakhadi. Most of the distriguished, head of the family assembled for **Shirlohanka.** Bom Bahadur was told by village Majhi, 'if you would do such nuisance again you will have to leave our village forever.'

However agrieved girl was paid the amount of Rs 30/—and a bottle of wine with a cock. Then Bom Bahadnr raised his head before the villagers, acknowledging his offence. He was left then

3. Jari Compensation paid for abduction of another man's wife :

Some Dhimals marry by absconding with another man's wife. If a man is found to marry in this way, he has to pay 'compensation of Rs. 60/—according to the demand of the first husband before the Majhi and other villagers, this being the custom.

Chote Dhimal of Setumari village was without wife, as his wife had died earlier without any issue. Since he was recognized as the oldman of fortyeight no Dhimal girl would accept him as husband. In 1977, he had been to Urlabari where weekly 'hat' is held every tuesday. He met a woman of about forty in a corner of the ground where she was selling liquor. He went there and bought a glass of liquor and he started talking jockingly if she would come to him.

Next tuesday he met again and this time woman agreed to go to his house. She went in the same evening and villagers knew this next day. After a week they were brought before the village head Majhi and other notables. The first husband was also present and notables enquired woman if she really wishes to leave her first husband. She replied in positive. Then chote Dhimal was asked to pay Rs. 60/–as the compensation. Chote Dhimal paid the amount agreedly and took the woman.

Majhi plays, not only a vital role in dispensing social justice, but he also conducts and leads the village religious affairs. He must lead the most important Dhimal religious festival 'Sirijat', which commences in the month of Asar (June–July), marking the beginning of summer. Previously the Dhimals used to present him firewood of about 50 kg. compulsorily for his leadership and services. In return, he used to offer them food and drink. The villagers also helped the Majhi in cultivation of his lands and harvesting, as a token of love and respect.

It will be clear from the above discussions that the Majhi used to be a very clever, shrewd and knowledgeable man of a higher status. Naturally he is found to be a wealthy man. After him, one of his sons, who is more clever and adept, becomes the Majhi. Majhi as such, is the head of the community organisationand his judgement, if not agreed to by a villager, he can go to lodge a complaint in the Village Panchayat, as the Panchayat in Nepal now has been given legal power of adjudication. Judicial and political roles of the Majhi no longer exist in the village now as before, though he still occupies the religious role.

Dhami or Priest :

After the prestigious rank of Majhi, the Dhami is recognised as the next. In the Dhimal society, the Dhami represents the priestly class. So they are respected and their services are required in various types of community rituals, fertivals and feasts. The Dhami performs mainly the social role of religious leader and priest. His demand is very high because of his knowledge in dealing with the personal and community (collective) problems through magico-religious practices. In the community shrine of Dhimal society, the Dhami has a prominent role to play. During festivals like, 'Sirijat Puja', 'Ashade Puja' and 'Naubangi Puja', the Dhami is specially felicited by the villagers and given presents. The Dhami shoulders the responsibility of assuring security and protection of village from external and internal (supernatural) threats, and offers animal sacrifices of fowls and other animals to different deities. It is the duty and right of the Dhimal Dhami to protect all the members of his society through his knowledge and power of magico-religious paraphernalia from the evil spirits, diseases and starvation (famine). During the Sirijat and Naubangi Puja he plays the key role. Every Dhami has to show his own propitiating power and skill on such occasions. If any Dhami fails to do it and is unable to satisfy the village-folk, he is replaced by another

Dhami. If he is replaced, he by his supernatural power can endanger or spoil the festivals of Sirijat and Naubangi Puja, to take revenge they believe. During these pujas only, the Dhami gets the opportunity to show his power to the village community. It was stated by the informants that once a Dhami was replaced by the villagers in a village. During **Sirijat** or **Ashade** puja, a pig was ofered as sacrifice. But the pig's flesh contained many small worms. They had the belief that this was caused by magical power by the displaced Dhami, to take revenge. The villagers then requested an Ojha i.e sorceror to counter this. He performed some sorts of enchantations and rituals. It was strangely found thereafter that there were no worms in the flesh of the sacrificed pig.

There is Raj Dhami above the ordinary Dhami and all of them are under his control. The Raj Dhami and ordinary Dhami were used to be paid by rice. Each Dhami would get the share of one maund of rice. However, with the introduction of land reform in 1964 which was first enacted in this area, giving rice to Dhami as remuneration almost has ceased.

It may be noted that the Raj Dhami could be taken from any community. There are Raj Dhamis from the Tharu community. There is a special sacred place in the village shrine, where 'Bahadur Chowdhary' is worshipped as Raj Dhami. Raj Dhami is a post of wise and knowledgeable man, which can be inherited from one generation to another generation. Raj Dhami is a post, the functions of which can't be taught to others orally or by demonstration. It is believed that when a Raj Dhami is dead, he appears before his son in the dream and teaches his **Mantras** (incantations) and instils all his powers into him. There are many less powerful assistant Dhamis under Raj Dhami. The assistant Dhami is called '**Hanuwa**' by the Dhimals.

Hanuwas have no magico-religious knowledge and power. They have not to undergo any training for the profession and do not get any quantity of paddy for their service. Still they are highly respected and regarded in the Dhimal society.

In the past, the Dhimal community were forest nomads, always surrounded by ferocious wild animals. These wild animals like, rhinoceros, wild elephant, wild cows and buffalos were tactfully avoided or killed for safety. When the community reached the stage of settld agriculturists, they were in need of a Dhami who could protect their agricul Hural fields from these wild animals by some magical powers. So they created the institution of Sirijat and Naubangi worships with colourful celebaration. The Dhami worships the deities on these occasions for the protection of agricultural crops, every year, and great festivals were held by all the members of the society on such occasions. The animals entering the agricultural fields could be driven back to other forest areas by such magical rites and power, they believed. To these days also, whenever pests and worms, web of spiders are seen in the paddy fields and in jute crops, the Dhami is called, who utters magical spell and incantations, and the worms are found to die, and thus the crops are protectd. He also counters the evil-spirits afflicting the sick and protects him from such evil forces. It is stated that generally the Dhami orders his **'Gaiyas'** (invisible cows that act under his supernatural power) to protect the village from such afflictions. Such Gaiyas are regarded as the guards of the villages and their function is to protect the villagers. There are many types of Gaiyas, such as, Milk-gaiya, Dhuipa, Hulman, Sul (Surapi)[卐], Taba and Tarau-gaiya. These Gaiyas have their special kinds of functions. For example, their function is to protect the breast of the cow, kill pests of paddy, drive away monkeys in the harvesting period, prevent famine, protect the villagers from disease, etc.

✤ The leaf of middle portion of banana plant.

Thus the Dhimal society even when living harsh uncivillzed conditions in the wild environment and forests, have had the institution of Dhami who could guide them and protect them from diseases, attack of wild animals and poor agricultural production due to attack of pests.

After a careful examination of these facts it is found that the chief functions of the Dhami are as follows.

(1) To become the mediator between the village community and the Supernatural Power :—

(2) To protect the life and property of the village community.

(3) To protect agricultural crops and implements.

(4) To protect people from ferocious wild animals.

Thus we can conclude that the Dhami is priest of village to propitiate the deities and he is well versed of spells and incantations acquired through his magico-religious power and can protect the village community from all sorts of evils–external, internal,–caused by spirits gods and godlings.

Ojha (Shaman or Witch-doctor) :

The Ojha occupies the next position to the Majhi and Dhami in the social hierarchy of the Dhimals. They are witch-doctors. By his power of spelling enchantment and incantations before a patient, he could drive out the evil spirit causing the disease. His main role is to be present for the treatment of any member of the commnity whenever called. He would even prescribe and distribute medicine made of forest herbs and roots. This knowledge cannot be acquired from or directly taught by a teacher to his disciple, but comes to one in dream. as they believe. They are not an occupational class of people, 'but the work is professionally transmitted from father to son. There are two kinds of Ojhas in the Dhimal society, dealing with evil and holy spirits. These not get any quantity of paddy for their service. Still they are highly respected and regarded in the Dhimal society.

In the past, the Dhimal community were forest nomads, always surrounded by ferocious wild animals. These wild animals like, rhinoceros, wild elephant, wild cows and buffalos were tactfully avoided or killed for safety. When the community reached the stage of settld agriculturists, they were in need of a Dhami who could protect their agricul Hural fields from these wild animals by some magical powers. So they created the institution of Sirijat and Naubangi worships with colourful celebaration. The Dhami worships the deities on these occasions for the protection of agricultural crops, every year, and great festivals were held by all the members of the society on such occasions. The animals entering the agricultural fields could be driven back to other forest areas by such magical rites and power, they believed. To these days also, whenever pests and worms, web of spiders are seen in the paddy fields and in jute crops, the Dhami is called, who utters magical spell and incantations, and the worms are found to die, and thus the crops are protectd. He also counters the evil-spirits afflicting the sick and protects him from such evil forces. It is stated that generally the Dhami orders his **'Gaiyas'** (invisible cows that act under his supernatural power) to protect the village from such afflictions. Such Gaiyas are regarded as the guards of the villages and their function is to protect the villagers. There are many types of Gaiyas, such as, Milk-gaiya, Dhuipa, Hulman, Sul (Surapi)[卐], Taba and Tarau-gaiya. These Gaiyas have their special kinds of functions. For example, their function is to protect the breast of the cow, kill pests of paddy, drive away monkeys in the harvesting period, prevent famine, protect the villagers from disease, etc.

✤ The leaf of middle portion of banana plant.

Thus the Dhimal society even when living harsh uncivillzed conditions in the wild environment and forests, have had the institution of Dhami who could guide them and protect them from diseases, attack of wild animals and poor agricultural production due to attack of pests.

After a careful examination of these facts it is found that the chief functions of the Dhami are as follows.

(1) To become the mediator between the village community and the Supernatural Power :—

(2) To protect the life and property of the village community.

(3) To protect agricultural crops and implements.

(4) To protect people from ferocious wild animals.

Thus we can conclude that the Dhami is priest of village to propitiate the deities and he is well versed of spells and incantations acquired through his magico-religious power and can protect the village community from all sorts of evils–external, internal,–caused by spirits gods and godlings.

Ojha (Shaman or Witch-doctor) :

The Ojha occupies the next position to the Majhi and Dhami in the social hierarchy of the Dhimals. They are witch-doctors. By his power of spelling enchantment and incantations before a patient, he could drive out the evil spirit causing the disease. His main role is to be present for the treatment of any member of the commnity whenever called. He would even prescribe and distribute medicine made of forest herbs and roots. This knowledge cannot be acquired from or directly taught by a teacher to his disciple, but comes to one in dream. as they believe. They are not an occupational class of people, 'but the work is professionally t ansmitted from father to son. There are two kinds of Ojhas in the Dhimal society, dealing with evil and holy spirits. These

Ojhas are more preferred than any other types of witch-doctors in Dhimal villages, who are also found in a large number.

Some ojhas motly specialise themselves in the treatment of children and womenfolk. The treatment includes offering the patients, herbs and holy water, or by shaking the spirit down with blades of grass and thereafter burning some rolls of cloth to exorcise it. 'Ojha Bhoka' (offering to spirts) is performed by chanting some special hymns loudly. Though the ojhas occupy a respected rank in the Dhimal society, they are not given any annual share of paddy.

Other dignified persons :

It has already been stated that special ranks are recognisable among the Dhimal society, Majhi and ojha respectively since-long time ago. Besides them, there are other people, who play the role of leaders or social workers in matters of various kinds of village administration, adjudication and development works. Since the panchayat workers have taken the role of majhi, he has no authority now to lead the villagers. The locat panchayat workers who can tackle and understand the problems of villagers have taken the leadership. These people have capacity to get their followers in new situations and environments.[卐] So it is seen that in the Dhimal society, sometimes the role of a person leading traditionally a group of people can be changed according to situation.[1] Thus we see that traditional village chiefs (Majhis) are unable to adjust and move forward according to the needs of the time and situations. So they are unable to influence the people, and hence the leadership of the Dhimal villages is now gradually

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[卐] Katz, Danel and Khan, Robert H. 1970, The Social Psychology of Organisation, Willy Eastern Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, P. 340

[1] Koss, E. L. 1964. "Families in Trouble", King and Crown Press, New York,

going out of their control and being taken up by the persons belonging to other ethnic groups.[1]

In the past, economic, condition, government service (power) and political strength did not play any vital role on the social set-up of the Dhimals, but religion had the most significant role to play in their social hierarchy, as was seen in their community festivals and worships. In order to occupy a prestigious high rank status or position, knowledge, cleverness. cleanliness, a tctfulness, having many kinsmen, a large family, membership of the village Panchayat (poltitical power) and wealth in the form of land were most essential in the Dhimal society.

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[1] Sportt. W. J. H. 1964, "Social Psychology, 'The English Language Book Society and Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, p.77

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHANGING POLITICAL FORCES AND THE DHIMALS

It is not known for lack of any written documents, as to who used to rule these Dhimal villages before king Prithivinarayan Shah united Nepal. The author of 'Kirati People', Mr. Iman Singh Chemjung says that 10 Limbus had divided this area in eastern Nepal among themselves and used to rule this territory. He is not certain about the exact date and mentioned it as 5th Century A. D. He has said that King Soiyak Lodohang used to rule the Dhimals of that area (1866-62, Part. I). Then the Sen Kings spread their domination on the present area of Dhimal settlements with their capital in Vijayapur. Mr. Chemjung also writes that later in 1970 A. D., the King of Sikkim, known as Fungcho Nymgcho Nymgyal conquered these 'Kirat' lands, including the villages of the Dhimals (pp. 102, Part II). This area was completely conquered by King Prithivinarayan Shah of Gorkha in 1774 A. D. After the unification of Nepal, what was the social system of the villages of the Dhimals is now known, but their oral traditions give us an idea of the system of Village Headmanship or Choumajhi System, as described earlier. This social system retained its root till the revolution of 1950, when the Nepali people and King Tribhuwan Bikram Shah unitedly threw, the autocratic Rana rule in Nepal. Until then, the Dhimals had the same archaic type of village social organisation, where disputes and quarrels were settled by the Headman and his associates peacefully.

In the Dhimal society, some social systems like, the institution of Choumaji' used to have a strong hold until sometime back. In such systems, an important village headman called 'Majhi' along with all the youths and old-folks of the village used to be present to adjudicate on disputes and award punishment. Though the Majhi had the sole authority, every member of this institution could have his full say and advise him. Such systems were given full social approval, along with all judicial power. All kinds of cases ranging from a simple domestic affair to theft divorce, division of property, rape, murder. etc. were discussed and settled in such para-judicial system.

The traditional post of Majhi and its authorities are inherited by many families even today. The custom of approaching the Majhi at the time of festivals and other occasions by the villagers for seeking his advice and suggestions still persist. Minor cases arising from domestic quarrels are still settled by the Majhi, older folks of the village and the Panchas. But though the old conventional laws and rules, norms and customs used to be fully accepted and obeyed by the people until sometime back, they are increasingly losing their ground slowly. During this time, the link between the people and the Government was limited to collection of land revenue only.

The revolution of 1951 trimmed off the remnants of family rule of the Ranas forever. But no Dhimal took part in it, and was aware of it. After sometime, they heard that the Rana's reign is over, and a **Democratic** Government has been established.

After independence too, there was no change in their life. But this change dramatically started influencing the whole life pattern of this community gradually. Many families began to migrate from the hills. They started acquiring lands by purchase in their villages. Malaria was gradually eradicated, and many forest areas were cleared, as many people began coming down in groups for getting land Now quarrels between their own kinsmen or community members, as well as the hill people started in full swing on land issues.

This revolution brought a new consciousness among the Dhimals. The contact and relationship between the Dhimals and the Limbus increased more and more. These are two similar type of ethnic groups and claim to belong to the same dynasty. They claim themselves to be brothers. Then they had several ethnic meetings (Chumlung) in several places, sometimes in the hills and sometimes in the tarai. This sort of **Chumlungs'** took place in the years 1951, 1954, 1956 and 1962–63. No written documents regarding these **'Chumlungs'** are preserved by the Dhimals. They know why and how the **'Chumlungs'** were arranged. In these meetings, they unanimously adopted a resolution 'to stop the system of Cashnut Marriage, and offering of 'bride price' and avoiding costly feasts.' They agreed that from that time 'negotiated marriage' will be their chief custom. These days, we see that these norms and usages have been normally accepted by all Dhimals in their cultural and social life. The other aim of holding **'Chumlungs'** was to find out the history of their community. The attempt to unite the Dhimals and the Limbus through such **'Chumlungs'** was to make their community stronger. Sometime after this event, it took a political shape. In the meantime, in the General Election of 1959, a rich Dhimal Majhi contested it as an independent candidate. But he was defeated. Later he said that he was defeated, because the Dhimals were simple and illiterate and could not understand what will be good for their future. and many of them had voted against him, although he belonged to their own community.

The elected Government of Nepali Congress was dismissed by King Mahendra of Nepal in 1960, mainly on the charges of corruption of the ruling politicians. Now, a new Partyless Panchayat System has been introduced in Nepal. New programmes like, land reforms, land redistribution and rehabilitation of the poor sections have been introduced. Malaria has been completely eradicated while migration of the hill-people into this territory has increased to a large extent.

Thus we see that by 1960/61, the Dhimal society has spectaculary advanced towards attaining political consciousness. They are now approaching the Government and taking help in social and economic matters, as are given to other sections, and thereby gradually improving their living condition. Thus there has been a change in the outlook of the Dhimal Society and their ways of life.

The elected Governmant of Nepali Congress in July 14th, 1959 could not influence the life of the Dhimal Society at large. They heard that the Congress people have won the election, but what sort of Government was installed was not properly known even to the few conscious Dhimals among them. In a short period, Nepal had witnessed a tremendous political upheaval and unrest, and the Panchayat System was first introduced in the Kingdom at this time. For sometime, however, the Dhimals did not participate in the Panchayat, because of their isolation and backwardness.

The main aim of the Panchayat System in Nepal was to free all people from social and economic exploitations. The political system of Nepal now is a 'Partyless Panchayat Democracy'. It is a 'three-tier system' composed of the Village Panchayat, the District Panchayat and the National Panchayat. Politically, the entire kingdom is divided into approximately 4000 villages, 75 districts and 14 zones. The poltical boundary of each Panchayat is based on its geographical situation and the distribution of population. Though the maximum population limit for village Panchayat is 2000, it has no rigid limit. Each village is divided into 9 wards and the population within the village is fairly evenly divided among these wards. One member for the village panchayat is elected from each of these wards.

In order to execute and supervise the day-to-day village activities, the 11 member Executive Committee called the 'village Panchayat' is formed by the village assembly (from all wards). The village Panchayat has a **Pradhaa Panch** (Headman) and a **Deputy Pradan Pancha** (Asst.head). In order to be elected, the Pradhan Pancha and the Deputy Pancha must get 2/3rds of the votes of the members of the village Panchayat.

In Panchayat meetings, they discuss and examine the village budget, analyse various development projects, which are important to the villagers and other important matters. The Pradhan Pancha is the Chairman of the Assembly. All the members are elected for 4 years. Each Village Panchayat is a legal corporate body of the entire village.

The main functions of the Panchayat, as set out in the Panchayat laws, are to implement the welfare and development programmes of the Government, collect essential census data and maintain law and order.

After the introduction of this syrtem, the Dhimals could not for many years, understand that can even claim and hold the various offices of the Panchayat. After their involvement for some time, they gradually became aware of its functions and utility. In 1962, a Dhimal Ward Member of Ward No. 3 of a village was elected as its member with majority votes. By that time, they had learnt many things from the various people of the hills who have migrated there, about the utility and functioning of the Panchayat system.

In 1967, for the first time in Damak Panchayat, a Dhimal was elected as the Pradhan Pancha Being Pradhan Pancha, he got many privileges. The budget provision of a local Panchayat is distributed ward-wise for development works by the order to the Pradhan Pancha. That year, Rs.3,00,000/- (Rupees three lakhs) was the budget of that Panchayat. But later, he was not liked by the majority of the Dhimal voters, who demanded his resignation. He disreputed his name, being charged with corruption, but he did not resign.

In the next term he was defeated, because there was a conflict between the Dhimal people about his candidature. There were two factions which resulted into a loose community solidarity. Now their Pradhan Pancha is involved in open politics. He aligned himself with the banned Nepali Congress Party. He became quite active and for this, on several occasions he was arrested and imprisoned. This man said to the investigator that in the recent referendum of 1980, he took active part in favour of multiparty system, which was defeated, as he could not support the Panchayat System, which was thurst on the people by force and rigging of votes. This fact however is controversial.

Thus we see that there are some very active workers in politics from the Dhimal oommunity in the banned Nepali Congress, and some are also followers of the Panchayat System. The author casually asked some villagers as to whether they had still any sympathy for this man, being of their own community ? They told that as he has gone proud, so they don't support him any longer. In fact, however, they were inclined to support him, if there would be no fear from the ruling politicians, namely the Panchas, to be penalised or victimised,

The author had further evidence of many young Dhimals aligning with the Marxist Group. These groups carry on underground activities.

After the referendum, a General Election was held in 1981. In that election, many Dhimal youths canvassed for the Dhimal candidate, who contested and won from the constituency of Morang.

District. There are Dhimals, as well as Rajbanshi and Tharus, who have helped this Dhimal **member** to be elected. Dhimals are not communal by nature, but caste-based results were found in most cases of constituencies in Nepal. Now that member from their community has gone to the National Assembly (Nepal's highest Legislative Body), they feel that their voice will be heard. From this we can can conclude that the Dhimals have been gradually secularising themselves in politics, religious and social life, thereby integrating themselves with the main culture of Nepalese traditions and patriotism.

From the above we see that despite their apparent isolation, the Damak Settlement villages of the Dhimals are related in multiple ways with the outside world. This contact with the exterior is maintained by a series of institutions that operate at different levels and in different patterns. Such agencies are the Panchayat, the visiting travellers the East-West Highway, traders, Government Officials of the Land Revenue Department, Health Assistants, Agricultural Technicians and the Police. The police chowki (Station) of Damak has its headquarters at Chandragahi. The nearest local police force operates from the Damak market area. The police are not permanently posted here, they come only occasionally on specific circumstances, and in search of murders, or in cases of accidents. They also maintain law and order of the whole Panchayat. There are also some special days, as market days, and these of community festivals, when the police are found to attend. They come in groups, perhaps looking for some wanted member of the banned political party, or to arrest a criminal. But such cases occur very rarely.

These are few kinds of situations in which the Dhimal and the police come in contact, at this level of conflict. But such situations are created from outside. The Dhimal villages are not a politically independent territory. They are a part of the bigger Nepalese society. The rules of the Government are framed by the Government and enforced by the police. The relation between the two, however, sometimes becomes tense. People do net trust the Government. In general, few of them consider it as a kind of enemy, but in some instances of developmental needs and land distribution, they see at a patron, with whom they must interact in a formalised manner to fulfil their needs. The relationship then, is one of opposition in terms of values and institutionalised set-up, and on the other of friendly co-operation for gaining assistance. But they do not have friendly and close relationship with the State or its Officials. They speak against the Government in communal and personal level.

This peculiar attitude of rural societies can be found in many places (for example, see Wolf, 1966 : 1-35). In some instances it assumes the form of a rural versus urban opposition. Government Officials are seen as urban types, with urban interests, and when they come into contact with rural society, they presume that it is with the intention of exploiting it The city (in this case District Headquarters where the chief District officer has his office) is seen as the embodiment of centralization, bureaucracy, impersonality. In many cases, the rural society is subordinated to the political and legal power and authority of the Government.

This gives rise to the emergence of some special professions and occupations, which act as mediators between the Government and the backward rural people. Local people distrust the police and the relations with them are ambivalent. They appear to respect them, but also fear them. We have the impression that there is also an element of hate. What is absent is identification or acceptance of the policemen as the representatives of the Government. When the police intervene in certain matters and begin asking them questions, the people do not talk with them; they try to avoid any involvement. The attitude is one of "Let them do their own jobs", and it is even more clearly manifest when they are asked to testify before the courts of law.

The Dhimal society in Damak has not understood the moral legitimacy of the State's laws. They see the laws of the Government as a 'tyrant power', which force them to onform. to certain patterns of behaviour. The law is seen by many as something imposed from outside. They avoid and hate the whole legal process, and other Government officials. The rational understanding of laws as the basic norms of social integration and protection is clearly lacking in them. The two basic concepts that are fundamental for analysing this attitude are-the concept of community and that of the Government. The community is affected by the law, but persists in using its own cultural modes to deal with any conflict. The result is tension between the two levels, as the different systems of values come into contact. The people become afraid and there is always a tendency of **suspicion** and avoidance in the relation between them and the Government officials and the police.

The relationship between the Dhimal people and the local Government agencies is not beset with increasing tension. It is true that the spread of new political consciousness through the Panchayat System, free communication due to the construction of the East-West Highway, and migration of hill-people into the Dhimal villages have together brought about some perceptible changes in their traditional ways of life and political and economic organisation. In the mean time, it is also seen that some other social and politcal forces are working among them, along with economic change, which have aroused a strong community feeling among them now. It is found that this small agricultural community are attempting to raise their 'status' by educating their children, sanskritsing their rituals and urbanising their ways of life. There seems to exist some apparent tension in the structural pattern of the village commuuity, they have preserved so far, their cultural unity structurally. In fact, the recent political changes and administrative reforms in Nepal have made a deeper inroad into the Dhimal society and its traditional village polity, with the increasing influence of the court of Law, new election system through adult franchise. Recent change in third Amendment of constitution of Nepal 1980, land reforms and new revenue collection system, family planning programmes and other Government Schemes like, rural development and rehabilitation programmes which have covered the interior villages.

So whatever they might have been in the past, at present-socially, economically and politically, this small agricultural Dhimal community have advanced considerably and are trying to integrate themselves with the mainstream of national unity and development, as cherished by the founder of Nepal, the Great King Prithivinarayan Shah long long ago, to make one Nepalese Nation.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

LIFE CYCLE

Conception :

Like most of the human beings the Dhimals believe that perpituation of the speciecs depend on mating. They have series of rituals associated with all the events of life cycle which ever birth, puberty ,marriage and death.

That a woman has conceived is realised when her menstruation is stopped for over a month. Though it is believed that one chould not cohabit with his wife during this period, it differs from person to person. The expectant mother is not given any special diet. It is said that she should not take spices and hot and sour food. But they do not generally follow such restrictions.

Birth :

In every human society, the life-cycle of the individual begins with birth, and some of the most important rituals and relationships are observed and attained with it, which are also intimately related with the Dhimal society, as elsewhere. The Dhimals have their own conception about the pain suffered by a woman at the time of of delivery of a child. They say that if a son is born, the mother suffers from continuous labour pain. The neighbouring women usually come to help her during delivery. They prevent the woman from sleeping. She has to keep awake, and sleep after normal delivery. When the pain is intense, a **dangarai** (midwife) is called to attend her. There are no midwives among the Dhimals. Sometimes a Tharu midwife is called These days, there are 4 physicians in the Damak market area. Sometimes a rich Dhimal calls one of them and takes his help on such occasion. There is also a Family planning Office, where a nurse is always present. They could also take her help.

When the Tharu woman fuuctions as midwife, she makes a vow to **'Chapagardini'**, a deity of the Tharus, to offer blood sacrifice far safe dellivery. The usual blood sacrifice in such case is that of a pair of pigeons or a small young goat or a pair of goats. This vow of blood sacrifice is offered on the day of naming ceremony of the child. After delivery, the midwife is paid a cash of Rs. 40/- to Rs. 50/-, according to the means of the family The umbilical cord is cut off and separated by a piece of thin broken clay-pot or **shred.** After birth, the mother has to stay in the lying-in-room with her baby for about a week. On the day of child birth, the mother is fed with fried **dal** (pulses) and rice. They say that these two cereals provide the mother necessary nurition. The first child birth usually takes place in the husband's house. During this time, her brothers also visit her to give all necessary help.

The mother is taken special care till the placenta comes out. Green vegetables are forbidden as the mother's diet. They believe green vegetable brings cold to her. They feed the mother with pig's meat, prepared in their own house. Fish and chicken are also given for strengthening her body.

Then 'Name giving ceremony' is held on 3rd or 7th day, after the umbilical cord falls off. This falling off generally takes place between 3 to 7 days. This day is called as **Sutusika** by the Dhimals. On this day the mother has to take hot bath. She is not allowed to take bath either in a river or a pond, for fear of being possessed by any spirit or ghost. The ashes and stone which she used are packed in a cloth and thrown outside. Then smoke of the **valaya** (a kind of fruit) is inhaled by the baby. Now the house is made neat and clean, and water touched by a silver coin or a strip, is sprinkled to purify the room. Then the name is given. Generally this ceremony is like the ceremony of the Brahmins, in which there is no compulsory rule that the child must be present during the naming. There is no tradition for giving a feast to the relatives on this day.

The birth of a son is preferred. The Dhimals name their children very interestingly. No astrologer is consulted for this. The name is given according to the present usage. If a reputed guest is present on that day, his name is given to the child. If the child is born on the day a minister has visited the village, he is named 'Mantri'; if a Daroga (Police Inspector) so visits, then he is named 'Daroga.' If a son is born on Sunday, his name is kept 'Aitbare'; if on Monday, 'Sombare' etc. If a child is born on the day a magician visited the village, he is given the name of 'Jadu' which means magic. The naming of daughter is also done in the same manner. When the father goes outside the village during the birth, she is given the name of the place where her father had gone. For example, if he has gone to Itahari, her name is kept 'Itaharini'. If the child is white like silver, she is is named 'Chadini'. If she was born on the day an aeroplance has flied over their village, she would be called Hawaijahajni' etc. Sometimes, the name of a child is given as **Sarkini** (cobbler), **Damaini** (tailor) etc. They believe that by giving such names, they can avoid the evil-eyes of supernatural power.

In Dhimal society, no outside person is called to give the name. This is done by the grand-father, father or mother. During investigations, however, it was found that in a wealthy man's house, a Brahmin was called for giving the name of the child. Now, because of the influence of Brahmins, some wealthy Dhimals have begun to perform such ceremony according to Hindu system.

There is no fixed date or associated ceremony among the Dhimals during the first rice-feeding of a baby. Rice feeding is considered as supplementary to breast feeding. If the mother of the baby is not strong and cannot breast-feed the baby, then rice is given to the child at any time but not earlier i.e. before three months. The rice giving is known as '**Umchapaligyang**'.No relatives are invited on this day.

Venra or tonsure : It is the system of first shaving of the head of a son or a daughter in the Dhimal society. This ceremony is not compulsory for all Dhimal people. Tonsure must be performed for those children, whose mothers had no child before because of miscarriage or abortion. Delaying in pregnancy requires special attention when an Ojha promises and propitiates the family deities like Kali and Masan by offering pigeons or ducks or hens. If a child is born after this promise, then tonsure has to be performed. On this day, the maternal uncle or any body-in relation to maternal-uncle is invited. He shaves the head of the child He is given a cash of Rs.5/– for this act. It is believed by the Dhimals that if the maternal-uncle takes the cash, the evil spirits or any external power would not harm the child. It is done for his or her health and protection. It is also believed that if the maternal uncle takes the cash, then all the sins of his neice or nephewi.e. the new-born are expiated. On this day, the near and dear ones are invited to a feast. The feast includes flattened rice, meat, rice and curd. A tonsure ceremony was held before me during my field study in the village Arnakhadi, where the wife of Mangal singh Dhimal got a son, after offering of pigeons and hens. The child's maternal uncle shaved the head. He took a cash of five rupes as Dhimal believed that the evil spirits would not harm the new born child. Then about twenty persons, specially the lineage members and immediate neighbours were given feast. Drinking, eating of beaten rice, hens and pig's meat was abundantly supplied till 3 P. M.

In Dhimal society, if a mother has a child after many infant deaths, the child's ear-lobes are pierced within 5 to 7 days after birth. A brass ring is worn on upper portion of both the ears. The examples of such cases are found in Dapgachi, Golatar and Kharkhare and Arnakhadi.

Paternity and Maternity :

The roles of father and mother are clearly defined in the Dhimal society. Paternity is a very strong sentiment, and few fathers would deny that this or that child is their. It is formally acknowledged by giving the father's surname to his child. Bearing the surname of one's father means that the child is born of legitimate union and that he can name who his parents are. When questioned in this matter, people emphasise the aspect that one should know his own clan and the name of his father. The right of inheritance is thus acquired. The duty of the father is to rear up his children properly. In the father-child relationship, there is an element of authority and behaviour control; something like an attitude of love and reverence to each other. This relationship must be clear-cut and socially approved, so that there is no ambiguity in the right of inheritance of land or property later. The surname is indicative of succession right and father must rear up his children properly.

Maternity is highly regarded by the Dhimals. They say that the mother is one who 'rears you up'; who takes care of you, who is always in direct contact with you. The image of the mother is that of a person who sacrifices herself for her children; who is full of love and care for them. So the father and the mother are both highly respected and loved.

The two different roles as perceived and practised by the father and the mother reflect the division of male and female and its implications in the family structure of the Dhimal society. The father as the head of rhe household, must be respected, because he has the authority and power to punish the wayward or offending children. The mother, by contrast, is more tolerant and knows how to deal with the children and to intercede with the father's rude measures of control, to give protection to her children. The two images complement each other in the actual structure of the household as a functioning unit.

The Dimal society has thus a clear and inter–dependent conceptlon of paternity and maternity and this shows a striking degree of consistance with the role structnre of th household as a unit.

Childhood :

The child is constantly supervised, even though he is allowed a certain amount of freedom or movement. Children are kept within sight by the mother, and most of the time in the company and supervision of their brothers and sisters. When they learn to walk, they are allowed to play in the courtyard, while the mother works in the kitchen and other parts of the house. She makes frequent checks as to where they are and what they are doing ? Older Children, perhaps. six seven and eight years old, are in charge of the younger ones and they are punished, if they do not take proper care of them and something untoward happens therefor.

There is no sense of urgency in the matter of toilet training. If the child defecates or urinates on the floor of the house or in a similar place, no fuss is made This happens frequently, and evidently any sort of education is not given for this particular habit formation. Toilet training does not start even at the age of four or five. Parents are not careful about this.

Corporal punishment is seldom given and when it is done, it takes the form of a few strokes with hand by the father, or with a stick. Children are generally warned by shouting at them at first and the punishment is not always given to a child who is misbehaving constantly. Babies are not punished at all, and it is only the children of three years and over, who are punished. The mother, as the person in most frequent contact with the children, is the one who actually applies the punishment, but if the offence is a bit serious, she will report il to the father on his return home and he will then punish the child in the manner called for. This is the usual practice in all settlements of the Dhimals.

Children have plenty of contact with their father, who sometimes takes them to the paddy field where he works, and there they try to help him, in whatever may they can. But most of the time, they remain near elder siblings. When the father returns from work, in late afternoon, he sits on the verandah and plays with the children. He thus maintains considerable close contact with his children.

Now-a-days, in most of the households, around the age of six, the children are sent to school for the first time. Primary education upto Class 3 is free and the books are supplied by the Government. The schools are situated in several villages. The only High School is situated near the Damak panchayat building. There are two Kindergarten and Nursery School in Damak and one in Urlabari, where three Dhimal children study. The Dhimal peasants are well aware of the utilitarian value of formal education and they send their children to schools in order that they may be able to live in a better way in a world, in which education has become increasingly necessary as a qualification for securing a rewarding employment. These days, a few Dhimals say that education is the only capital that the poor can leave to their children. But there are only a few Degree and Diploma holders among them.

Even before they go to school, children are educated in the roles that a man and a woman are expected to perform in the Dhimal society. Boys go with their fathers and help them in simple agricultural tasks, and also take care of animals. The girls remain in the house and help their mothers in washing, fetching water, house cleaning and so on. In this sense, the male-female dichotomy is being emphasised in the pre-school age (for similar pattern, see wolf, 1956). Boys are not allowed to perform female tasks and the girls, male tasks. For the boy to do that, would be to behave in a masculine way-a reversal, both sexes equally wish to avoid.

Sexual patterns :

The Dhimal society, like every social system has institutionalised some norms and ways for dealing with sex. Children learn the appropriate ways of behaving not directly from their parents, but by being punished or scolded, when they violate the norms. Sexual discussions between children of the opposite sex are strictly forbidden and any form of sexual play is a taboo. The main mechanism used to inculcate ideas on appropriate sexual behaviour is physical segregation. This is practised in sleeping arrangements and in other areas of family life, such as, bathing and excretory habits. The child upto the age of five, is considered not conscious of sexual behaviour. But the older children gradually become more conscious and it is siad that they have ingrained 'malice' and this could lead to wicked sexual behaviour.

If we examine the educational process of the child within the family, it will be seen that certain attitudes are emphasised constantly and the child must learn these by heart. In Dhimal society, the attitudes that are given importance are those of being well brought-up and being trained to respect others. These are instilled both in the mind of males and females. It is difficult to describe what they mean by being educated and being able to show respect. The aim seems to be to produce a well-behaved person, who emphasises harmony in his social behaviour, who does not offend anybody. Obedience is an important element, as one should obey one's father, one's teacher, the priest (cf. Manners, 1956). Respect implies a sort of social distance, of social segregation. of not "touching" other persons and at the same time being able to be on friendly terms with him or her. These are the behaviour patterns that are emphasised. Sex matters are scarcely ever mentioned by adults in the presence of children or persons of the opposite sex. It can be mentioned only when all present are adults of the same sex and about the same age. If the children are present and a sexual joke is made inadvertently, they listen, but they do not join in the laughter. The position can be better understood, if we see how the incest rules operate among the Dhimals. This is the fundamental sexual prohibition in the Dhimal society. The male who commits incest, gets a strong deterrent punishment.

To prevent 'father-daughter incest', the father and the daughter minimise the amount of physical contact. Coupled with this physical segregation, comes the respect that the daughter should have for her father (cf. O. Lewis, 1951). He is seen as revered and a somewhat authoritarian figure and vice-versa, he should protect his daughter from other men. Thus physical segregation is reinforced by the element of respect.

In the mother-son relationship, these elements assume a somewhat different connotation. The element of physical segregation is not so extreme, as that between daughter and father. The mother is "desexualised" in relation to her son. This is done by making her something of a quasi-religious personality, a person who can even be willing to die for a child (a son in this case).

In the brother-sister relationship, physical segregation is severely enforced. They sleep in different places and avoid nakedness and any physical contact. They should not engage in any type of game involving physical contact, because these provide temptation for sexual intimacies, which must be avoided, at all cost (cf. O Lewis, 1951). With regard to respect, the situation is rather similar to the father-daughter relationship. The brother must naturally respect his elder sister. In addition, he assumes the role of her protector and operates as a sort of 'father figure', protecting his sister from other men. It is not by accident that this happens. Both the father and the brother are males, and male values emphasise sexual aggression. That is why it is said that in Dhimal society, the brother should act toward his sister as a second father. These values are instilled in the boy from his childhood, and it is a common sight to see young boys protecting their sisters from other boys at various places.

Transition to Adulthood :

Transition to adulthood is a gradual process, in which the person gradually acquires those patterns of behaviour that define him or her as an adult. In Dhimal settlements, there is a clear conception of this process. For the female, the change from a girl to a woman is intimately related with marriage. The process of becoming a woman is more than just one having grown-up physically. Eveybody sees that the girl has become taller, her hips have broadened and so on. When she menstruates for the first time, her parents consider her a woman. But she has to have what people call **taruni** i.e 'young', if she is going to be considered as an adult.This is a combination of mature behaviour and some basic experience that would allow her to perform her role as a housewife effectively and efficiently. She should know how to cook, sew, and take care of the children and of her husband. She is considered an adult, when people think that she can fulfil these roles adequately. There is also an age-criterion around which the female must begin to act as an adult, and this is from 16 to 20 years.

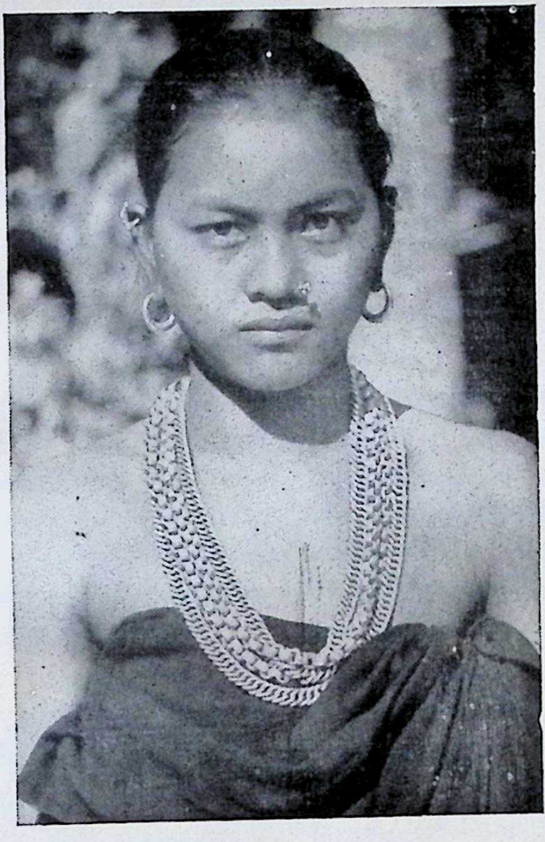
For the male also, although age and physical growth are necessary, they are not snfficient. The elements that determine their adulthood are a little different. If in the woman, they emphasise her future role as house wife, in the man, they are elements that will define him as a household head. He is defined as an adult, when he is an independent person. This means, he is gentle, serious, has job, land, some resources, and a house. Again the intimate relationship between marriage and adulthood becomes relevant in his case too. If the man has these, or the capacity to have these, he is in the process of becoming a 'full-fledged adult'. Of course, he mnst behave in a mature way, but if he has the qualifications described above, i.e is considercd to have behaved in that way.

In courtship, the relationship between the prospective son-in-law and father-in-law is vital. The whole courtship period could be summarised as one in which the future husband tries to gain the favour of his future father-in-law Of course, he must also gain the good assessment of the girl, who has relative freedom of choice.

There are several formal occasions when the opposite sexes come into contact in a regulated way, which permit a man to declare his intention to a girl. At fairs, Sirijat festivals, **Dhang Dhange** Mela and even in the market, this can be done. If the girl answers in the affirmative, the male–if he is 'serious' and plans to marry her– must visit her house to speak with her parents, specially with her father. It is he, who has the key-role in deciding if the courtship can continue.

During and before the courtship, there are patterns of behaviour that must be followed in relations between the young people of opposite sexes. The youth is supposed to behave with respect towards the girl, but at the same time and within that framework, he must take the initiative in all matters.

The young people, both men and women, do not have very clear idea about marriage, but the expectations they have shown clearly manifest their recognition of role-differentiation within the household. Men say that they want a wife, who would care for them and give them children; and women complement this picture by stating that they want children and a house and a good husband.



A Dhimal girl with Silver neckless

The general attitude towards getting married seems positive one, and the concern of many old people in Dhimal settlements is that in their opinion, the young people today marry too readily, without having any matured thinking, and later they have problems.

Marriage marks the individual, as a full-fledged adult. In a sense, it is closely related to the first important ritual in the individual's life-cycle.

Marriage, as an institution has a very important place in the Dhimal society Men and women are regarded as mature, well-settled, respectable, responsible and prestigious only when they are married. Marriages, according to the data collected, are usually held either in the Damak Panchayat or Jhapa in the Morang District, within the community members. Although the Dhimals cannot well-define their clans, they claim that they are an exogamous group. It has, however, been found during the survey, marriage has also taken place between the members of the same clan. The clan lineages, however, seem to be true exogamous units within the Dhimal society.

Marriages among them are mot permitted within a clan (i.e. **Donge** cannot marry **Donge**). In the past, marriages were contracted without observing the rules of exogamy in many cases, but recently marriage within the clan is not seen. There is a rule made by the Dhimal headmen that no marriage within the same clan upto three generations, should be contracted. The marriage between two clan members within the Dhimal society is referred to as 'breaking the bones', a conception based on the belief that males contribute the bones and structural parts of the body, while females the flesh and soft parts of the body.

Cross-cousin marriage upto three generations is not ordinarily arranged or allowed. If such marriages are allowed, they say, there is always risk, as ancestral gods getting angry curse and the offsprings donot survive Although a few such marriages are still arranged by the elders, it is however common for the adults to choose their own spouses. However, the use of classificatory 'kin terms' greatly limit the choice of marriage partners. All members of the village are addressd by 'kin terms', both actual and classificatory. Thus flirtation or marriage is permitted only with those women whom a man calls 'sali'.

The pattern of marriage between matrilateral crosscousins is not so common before, due to an increased contact with marriageable partners in other neighbouring villages. Numerous fairs and festivals are held throughout the year in the surrounding villages. It is becoming more popular for the local teen-agers to attend these fairs, and it is there, that they come into contact with many unmarried people of either sex coming from other villages too. Girls go to sell liquor and pork, and they flirt freely with their choosen customers, since there remains no parental supervision.

Sexual aberrations are socially condemned. Marriageable girls are not openly permitted to have sexual relations even with their prospective marriage partners. Premarital sexual relation is not socially condoned, and those who commit such act, try to keep it secret. Such relationships may lead to marriage, if the partners so wish. In that case they have to go to the village Panchas and take their formal sanction. The boy has to give a prescribed amount as fee, along with liquor to the Panchas.

The Dhimal society is patrilineal. Residence patterns may be either patrilocal or neolocal. Elder brothers generally set up separate households with theit share of the property within a few years (generally two years) after marriage, while the younger brothers stay with their parents and inherit the house. This pattern gives the wives of the elder brothers considerable independence.

Marriage is generally monogamous, polygamous cases being rare. In the census taken of 265 marriage cases only 4 cases of polygamy type were found. Polygamy does always here plural wives i.e. polygamous in nature. Sal Bahadur Dhimal (40) of Jambujhar-village can be cited as an example having polygamous type of marriage. Sal Bahadur married his first wife at the age of twenty. His first wife was elder than 'him. She gave birth to three daughters. In the meantime the first wife was looking older and older. She would look after the house, pigs, looms and field seriously as a very good wife. She felt ill and her health was gradually deterioated. She looked fragile and like an old woman. Sal Bahadur, a healthy man, was lookimg in several villages for the second wife. He then married second wife in 1969. Second wife was younger than him. She was beautiful healthy but lazy. Two wives started quarrelling. The disputes and quarrel was so intense that in 1976 second wife left the house one evening and never returned..

In another case, Mahabir Dhimal of Dapgachi had three wives. But his first wife is dead and two are living together. Two wives though occasionlly quarrel are well balanced by their husband, as he is rich and is the **majhi** of the village.

In the past, clan and relationship were not usually idenified during the marriage. Such identification started only after 1950's, when the village elders decided and made it a rule that all Dhimal people must marry within the clan and between the relatives.

Social prestige and economic condition, along with health are the main criteria for the selection of bride. Posession of land and earning are becoming essential factors these days for choosing the groom. Education has not been the criterion till now. Previously Dhimal girls prefer to marry the boys younger than them. It is because younger boy can toil hard for agricultural activities. But now the trend is slowly changing.

Marital age for a boy is 16-20 years and 14-15 years for a girl. But in some cases it was found that girls have attained the age of 25 without searching a boy for them.

Parents seemed to be more liberal in allowing their daughters to finalise the selection of their husbands. Men with long beard and moustaches are avoided by the girls, as thry are considerd old according to their belief. No widower could easily get a second wife, since the Dhimal girls always prefer young men as their would-be husbands. So it is seen in many settlements that wives are older than their husbands by even ten years. Furthermore, girls look matured before they are married, because of the following social considerations and factors :—

(1) It is customary in the Dhimal society to search for an elder or matured bride for their sons. They think that such a partner would always be an active and good housewife.

(2) Daughters are loved too much in the Dhimal soceity and are always a very pet child to them.

(3) There is no tendency among the Dhimal girls to love and marry and leave their natal house before it is settled by their parents.

(4) The rule in the Dhimal society is to wait till the request for marriage comes firrst from the groom's side, because of social prestige. Traditional patterns indicate that no marriage is negotiated and finally settled till the request for marriage is made by the groom's parents for four times. One Dhimal father stated, "The marriage should not be settled on first request, for the boy's parents may suspect that the girl is not virgin, but spoilt.' The boy comes to the house of the bride first with his father, next with his mother, then with the relatives (kinsmen). Finally the date is fixed on the fourth visit. In every visit, the bridegroom's party must present two bottles of home-made wine (about 200 gms. of nuts (**Supari**), 4 packets fo tobacco (**biri**), and 3 packets of cigarettes and a match-box to the bride's father. The visiting party, on the final day, is called as **Bejlaighelai** (**Kanyarthi**) in the Dhimal society. The expenditure thus incurred amounts to

Rs.100/–to Rs 150/–.This process was wittnessed in the marriage of Jit Bahadur Dhimal, a son of **majhi** of village Arnakhadi.

When the date is fixed, the groom's father makes the rits or marriage payment to the bride's father. Marriage payment includes, two bottles of wine (**gora**), two pitchers of rice-beer, a cocount, nuts and tobacco. The groom's party consisting of about seven men are then offered delicious food and the liquor brought from the groom's house, supplemented by such food provided by the bride's father.

In the traditional custom, after this, the would-be husband usually stays in the bride's house for about a month. This is essentially done to see, if he is actually fit to accepted as son-in law. This custom, however, has been **abolished in** the Dhimal society at present.

Marriage ceremony :

Young virgin girls are married socialy and ritually, only after the customary ten types of 'rits' 卐are paid to the bride's father by the father of the bridegroom.

Invitations (**a nut or card**) are sent through men before three days of the marriage. All the invitees are presented a bottle of wine or beer or cash equivalent to its cost. If the marriage ceremony is to be held inside the village, a pot of water, instead of liquor, is given to the invitees. A woman can visit it, but she has to take her lunch after returning home. If the marriage is of their own affinal kins, she can come even before two days to help in the management or ritual affairs. The relatives come with rice, firewood, vegetables before two days. They include ordinarily the young men and women from among nearest kins. The male and female helpers are called **Tolaha Dharni**' respectively in their society.

Mustard oil worshipped by the Dhami, is given to all the members of the procession (**barati**) to smear on their face, hands and feet before they are fed with meat, rice and liquor, in order to avoid any evil event occurring on their way to the bride's village. A holy lamp is kindled by oil before them. This is done before the beginning of the procession.

Rich men arrange for bullock-carts or vehicles (Jeeps) for taking the members of the procession to the bride's house. But mostly, people prefer to walk on foot on this occasion. Two friends or sisters or daughters of the maternal uncle remain all along with the bride on this day for her security, custody and care. They are known as **'Lokanti'.** Hired musicians are also taken in the procession. The members drink liquor when they reach the bride's house, before entering it. This drinking of liquor before the bride's house is called **'Damata Amkagora'** by the Dhimals. They reach the village before the sunset, when the young boys of the village stop the procession till they are paid Rs.5/-. Here also two bottles of liquor are exchanged between the members of the procession and the bride's party. This happemed in the marriage of Jit Bahadur of the village Arnakhadi. Next, the older people come to stop the procession, till exchange of liquor and payment of Rs.8/- are again made by the groom's party. By this time, **huka** (hubble-bubble) which is customarily brought by the bridegroom's party is offered to the village elders. When the procession reaches near the main entrance of the bride's house, the young village girls again stop them. They are again paid Rs.10/- as customary and the procession is allowed to enter the house. No ornaments or garments are brought by the procession for presentation to the bride. In some cases, a **'Bona or Petani (Sari)'**, a comb and hair-oil are presented. Ornaments are given when the bride is taken to the bridegroom's house.

Types of compulsory rits (marriage payments) :

It has been already mentioned that a pot of beer and two bottles of wine must be presented to the bride's party, as soon as

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卐 Marriage payments.

the procession (**barati**) enter the bride's house. After this, the other very important ten types of rits are made.

These ten types of marriage payment (rits) are very significant, since marriage is not approved socially without such marriage payments in the Dhimal society. Presence of the village Panchas, elders and bride's father is always essential during the period of making these rits (marriage payments). Materials to be presented are kept on a banana-leaf.

The types of rits are as follows :—

1. Kantaka :

This is one of the most vital and important 'rit' and is also known as Chumauni' in the Dhimal society. Two bottles of liquor and one rupee are presented by the groom's party for this type of 'rit'. While doing this, they utter loudly, "We have given the 'rits'. "Then they distribute the liquor to the pride's party. The Panchas permit all to drink the liquor. Any one refusing, is forced to drink it.

(2) Dhankasoiri : This payment includes seven paisa plus seven chest-nuts. This 'rit' is paid to the youths of the bride's village. The significanee of this 'rit' payment is to beg pardon of the bride's village friends, as the groom is taking her away from their village after marriage. This is alos called **'Danagelai'** by some informants, and it should not be paid to old folks.

(3) Dhudhabali or Dudouli : This is a gift to be paid to the mother of the bride in obligation for her breast-feeding, and maternal love and care. A sum of Rs.2/–is paid for this. If the mother ts dead, this payment may be made to the elder bro-

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[卐] According to the informants, an amount equivalent to Rs. 300/- to Rs. 400/- used to be collected as 'rits' during the 'Chumauni' in 1950.

ther's wife. This system of 'rit' payment is also known as **'Dhudhouli'** in the Dhimal society.

(4) **Panchaili :** The village Panchas and elders who are invited and come on the occasion have also to be duly honoured by offering a 'rit'. They are paid Rs.5/–for this.

(5) **Dhami** : Dhami is an important person in the village social organisation. So, as the mark of respect, he is also paid an amount of Re.1/–and a bottle of wine as marriage payment.

(6) **Majhi (Village chief)** : He is also a very important leader of the society. He is paid in the same manner as made to Dhami. At this time, both parents of the bride and groom meet and salute him and exchange a cup of wine with each other.

(7) **Gharmaini :** This is the 'rit' presented to the bridegroom's party by the bride's party. If the gifts or 'rit' are not made in 'Kantaka' by the bridegroom's party, no payment is required to be made by the bride's party. The 'rit' consists of two bottles of wine and a pitcher ot beer.

(8) **Chorkasur :** It is paid in the case where marriage by elopment has to be sanctioned socially. In this case, two bottles of liquor are given to the bride's father.

(9) **Door obstruction :** This is the 'rit' to paid as soon as the procession with the bridegroom reaches the entrance of the bride's house. In this, the Panchas are paid the amoont of Rs. 2/–each after the marriage feast is over and the groom's party leave for their village.

(10) **Senkerauni (Sambandha Nalachaka)** : This is the 'rit' paid to trace out the geneaeology of the bride and the bridegroom by either party. The amount of Rs.5/– is paid to the seniormost male of the village and a feast is given to all. While eating some people pretentiously cry aloud and say that they are unable to swallow bones and demand liquor. All the **'baratis'** rejoice themselves in a hut separately constructed for their night-stay. Next day, early in the morning, they again demand liquor as a customary usage to wash their faces.

The bride and the **bridegroom** are welcomed and a **'tika'** i.e mark is given on their forehead, first by the parents of the two, and then by other kinsmen. Presentation of land, utensils and clothes are sometimes made on this occasion. This system of making presentation is called **'Danabiki'** in the Dhimal society.

The couple are taken to the shrine of **Maharaj.** Animal sacrice by killing a hen or goat is made to Him for the happy and prosperous life of the couple. The bride and the bridegroom are then given a reel of thread and both of them catch in and encircle the shrine seven times. The couple are presented with a pot full of rice-beer and a bottle of wine after this, as a token of farewell. Now the bride goes to her new house with her husband.

The same worship and animal sacrifice are performed in the shrine of Maharaj in the village of the bridegroom. Gifts and presentations are given to the couple by the relatives and invitees. A feast is given to the kinsmen on the day, in which the food prepared are served by the bride to them.

After the feast, village friends and kinsmen assemble and go out for fishing in small groups. This system of fishing for the first time in the marriage ceremony, is known as **'Hayamang'** in the Dhimal society.

Fishes and small stones are brought and ground into powder. The ashes of mustard-stalks, rice, chilli, garlic and cast-off intestine of the pig are mixed together and a curry is prepared with these. This food is supplied to the bride's kinsmen to cut joke.

Next day, all the female members of the bride's family and kinsmen go for fishing. This is the day, when a feast is given specially to all the female 'Kutumba' (kinsmen). This system of giving feast and fishing in not practised these days in the Dhimal villages. Recently there was not such procedure observed in the marriage of Naresh Dhimal of Damak who married in Morang

The bride lives for a month in her new residence. She thus adjust and assimilate herself with the new environment and learn to well-manage all household works there. Then the bridegroom along wtth the bride visit her wife's natal house again. This is called 'banchagele, by the Dhimals. On this occasion, he must present one bottle of wine and a loaf to each nearly related member of his parent-in-law.

The above rituasl relate to marriages performed through negotiation. Besides this type of marriage, there are other three types of marriage prevalent in the Dhimal society :

1) Marriage by offering Supari (Nut or Supari Vivaha) :

This type of **'Supari Vivaha'** was a custom of the past. After a young man had offered a nut in the hand of the girl of his choice, they were permitted to marrv, after performing some social rites. The would-be husband then took his future wife to his place. But this custom has been abolished because sometimes another man went there and claimed to be her husband. Thus they have had a right to sexual access, by giving nuts to the same girl. The real marriage ceremony, however, took place with one of them, even sometimes after the birth of a child in such cases. When a man goes to a woman with a bottle of beer and few other presentations, makes her the offer and if she accepts it, then marriage between them takes place in all such cases. The customary 'rits' have, however, to be paid. On the day of the marriage, the bridegroom goes to the house of the bride. He has to spend a day in the house and on the following day, both the bride and bride groom come together in the house of the groom. Within seven days, the groom has to go back to his father-tn-law's house along with a bottle of beer and a loaf of rice and flour, to feed his father-in law. Dhimal women wear ornaments, specially on such occasions, on their neck, hands and fingers.

2) Marriage by force :

It is just like the one discussed above. Here if a girl does not accept the nuts presented by the boy, she is forcefully taken away. But such girl would return again on the first opprtunity and flee away. In such cases, the father of the girl would call the villagers and the village Panchas and request them to impose due punishment and fine on the offending boy. He would tell them that his daughter is virgin, when she is brought back by them. However, sometimes they were married together. But this system of marriage has been totally abolished after the revolution of 1950's in the Dhimal society.

(3) Marriage by elopement :

This is a type of marriage usually performed by the poor Dhimals. Sometimes, if the 'rits' cannot be paid on economic grounds and marriage cannot be solemnised for this, the girl is sent to the boy's house by the parents in case of marriage by consent by both the parties. This sort of marriage was performed by Kusunde Dhimal Birkhi of Jahada village recently. In Dhimal villages, the Dhimal Society has maintained its own social value system and cultural consistency to some extent it has been influenced by the Hindus. Thus we can visualize some changes in marriage pattern itself.

A Dhimal girl from Beldangi village was married to a Brahmin youth in 1978. The Brahmin boy and Dhimal girl met regularly for abont six months in Damak bazar, during the weekly fair. They were in intense love. The boy took initiative and married the girl. The bride was not accepted by the Bramin parents. So this pair started living separately. But since 1980 they constantly visit their parents. They have now one son and a daughter.

In another sense we can say that this is the example of Hindu influence and the begining of intercaste marriage.

The cases of intermarriages between Tharu boy and a Dhimal girl and Rai boy and Dhimal girl is settled in the Damak, after the prolonged provocation of both commnuities when traditional feast was given by both the parties concerned. The Dhimal youth are becoming active and say "we are no more conservative like our fathers, we want and respect intercaste marriages".

Besides the types of marriages described above, widow marriage is also found in the Dhimal society. One's elder brother's wife can be married on payment of 'rits', after his death.

Widow marriage is socially sanctioned and the children there of, can equally inherit the parent's property.

Divorce :

Divorce is not uncommon in the Dhimal society. A young girl may marry two or three times, before she chooses the husband she will remain with. But this is uncommon these days. The reasons given for divorce are :—not getting well with her husband; not getting well with her mother-in-law; or falling in love with someone else. A woman obtains an informal divorce by either returning permanently to her natal house, or by running off with any other man (Jari). If she runs off with another man, her husband would call her clan members together and demand that they return the girl. The couple would be brought before the village Pradhan and notables and the lover sued for compensation by the husband. Generally the compensation (jari) is about Rs.100/- now, though it was only Rs.30/- to Rs.40/- sometime back. There are four cases of divorce in the census made by the author.

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1. In Nepal. U. S. Doller is equivalent to about Rs. 18/-40 (Nepalese currency) at present.

A woman seldom divorces her husband after the birth of a child. Perhaps this is because of her higher status in her husband's house, because of begetting a son.

Old Age :

When the people are old in the Dhimal society, it is expected that they will be respected and obeyed. This is the ideal pattern, and it is one in which young people are expected to obey the elders, almost automatically. These days, the people refer to the young school-going boys that "they may know much that is in books, but we know the real things that come only with experience."

As a part of the life-cycle of the person, age has somewhat different implications for a man and a woman. A man has almost always headed a household and exercised the role of the provider and it is not easy for him to abdicate those functions when the time comes. That is one reason, why men work almost until they die and that continues well into their sixties and seventies. Even 'retired men' with no need to work are always on the move, doing this or that.

Today, they would not lose authority in most cases if they ceased to work, because the system of social security will enable them to maintain the role of the provider. Therer is also the moral content of the role of household-head, and even in the few cases, where the household-head is old and does not work and another man (e.g. his son) is the one who earns, the money is handed over to him and spent by him according to his discretion. There is a moral obligation, not to deprive old men of their authority, at least not completely.

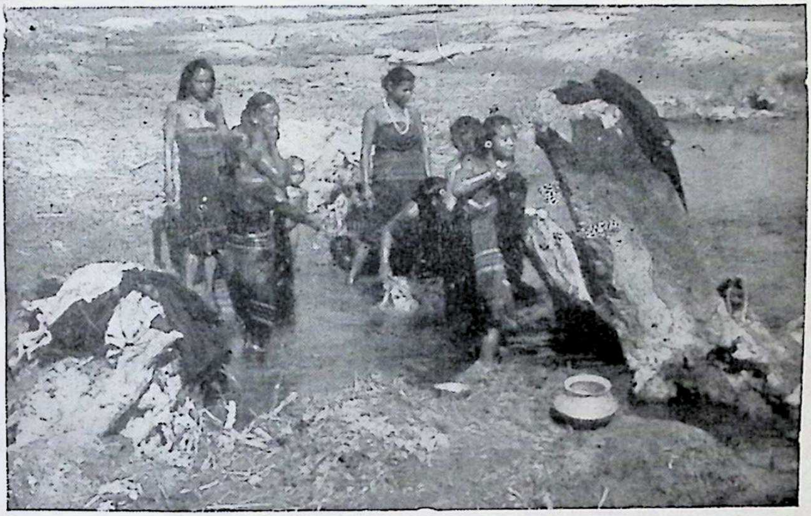
Most men, whose wives die before they do, or who get divorced, remarry very soon in most of the cases. In the case of old men, they state that it is very hard for them to take care of themselves and of the house, and that they need a woman in place of the departed, as women are the ones who understand how to perform household tasks. If they cannot remarry due to traditional constraints, they stay with their married sons or even sometimes with daughter.

The position of the woman left widow or divorced, is different. She has never had to provide for the household, as her role has always been in the domestic sphere. In this context, it is easier for her to go to live with some of the children separated, and she will not remarry. In some cases, she lives alone with her land and property, with some close kin and children or grand-children.

The Dhimal society is consistent in the way it looks after its old men and women. The man avoids becoming dependent on others and so maintains the masculine value of independence and self-reliance; the woman, who has always been dependent, can make an easier transition, usually shifting her dependence from one household to another.

Disposal of dead :

The Dhimals normally bury the dead, though some prefer to burn it. The ritual of burying the married or unmarried dear are largely the same, except for some minor differences. If the dead is an unmarried boy or girl, banana or flower saplings are planted on the grave. This, however, is not the custom in the case of married ones. While burying the dead, fowls are sacrificed along with the offer or rice and drinks. Purifiication ritual is performed at one's own convenience. This generally takes place on the **fourth day of death,** in most cases. Until the purification rites take place, every member of the family and related lineage members should all observe the mourning. On the day of purification, the members of the funeral procession are given a feast and the



Bathing for Purification in the river-side

There are no fixed places to bury the deceased in the Dhimal society. In Dhimal villages, there was a hill-like muddy bush called 'Chyandada'. The dead were buried there. But now, this stretch of land is inhabited by the blacksmiths. Fields are cultivated and the Dhimals take the dead bodies to the bank of river **Mai** for burial or cremation. At present, the system of burying the dead is decreasing. The dead are cremated like the Hindus. This is also a change in the Dhimal ritual norms, which they have borrowed from the Hindus of the area. While burying the dead, all belongings, including his books, are also buried under the soil.

Mortuary rites :

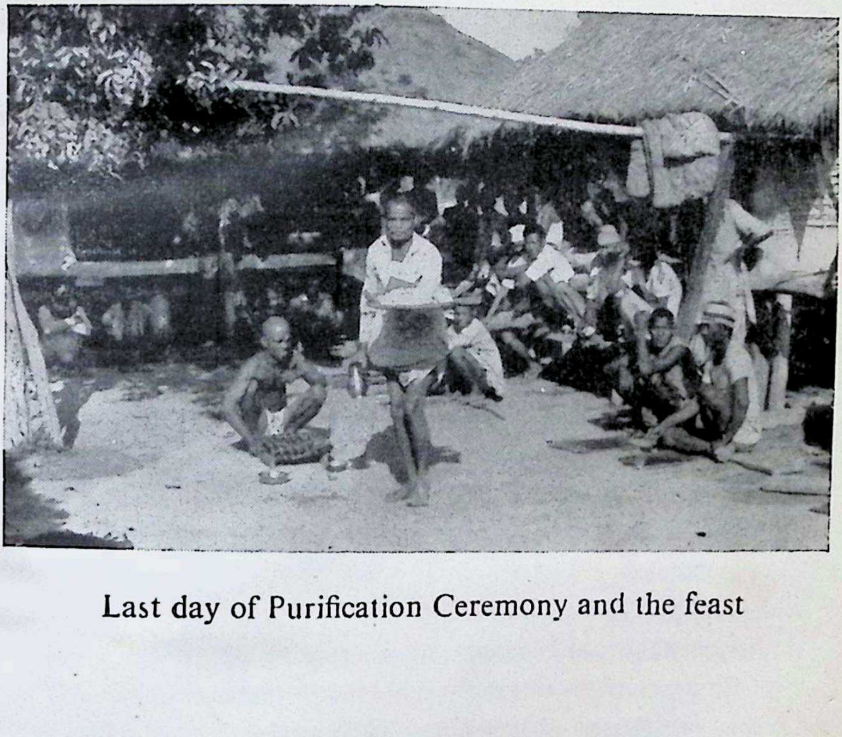
The death of a Dhimal renders the lineage members ritually polluted for a period of four days. During this period they are not required to refrain from eating food cooked in oil or seasoned with salt. At first, the people who have gone with the funeral procession are purified by sprinking the water touched by a silver or gold strip. Then the principal mourner must give a feast for those participating in the burial rites Lineage members are forbidden from propitiating their household deities or performing marriages until the purification rite is held to signify the cessation of further intercourse between the living members of the lineage and the deceased, and to indicate the return to normal relations between the lineage and the rest of the community.

The variety of food served at mortuary feasts consists of pig's meat, rice and millet, beer and liquor. T e expenditure depends mainly on the number of guests and financial means of the family members. Participation in this rite is a function of spatial, kinship and status distance between the mourner or host and his invited guests. Persons resident of the same neighbourhood are invariably invited to the mortuary rites and the feast. The spatial factor, however, is conditioned by kinship ties. Since lineage members are required to be present for ritual reasons, the degree of their spatial separation from the host is irrelevant. Ties of agnation outside the lineage are also of some importance in determining the range of invitees. Other than linege mates, those who share membership of a local clan segment, are not ritually affected by a death. Nevertheless, many recognise the loss of an agnate with sorrow and sympathy by participating in the funeral rites.

The participation of affinal relatives is essential for both prestige and ritual reasons. The total expenditure for one such mourning ceremony in which about hundred people attended, was about Rs.400/–.

In 1981 during my field study, an old man (62) of Dapgachi village died, because of his prolonged illness. During the last day of mortuary rite, almost about hundred lineage members were present for purification ceremony. Principle mourner **Jetha** had given feast to the lineage members. In that village, most of the lineage members had brought a cock or donated Rs.5/- to the mourner. It is the custom of Dhimal Society to contribute on such occassion, absence of which is taken seriously by the villagers All the invited lineage members were given feast with pig's meat, flattened rice, bear and locally made wine.

Status distinctions are expressed in the absence of social superior from the mortuary rites of his inferiors. Attendance implies recognition of the superiority or equality of the host. The concept of this principle with that of egalitarianism is rsolved by excluding women from the conceptual hierarchy. The greater a man's status, the higher the number likely to attend the rites he observes.



Last day of Purification Ceremony and the feast

CHAPTER NINE

WORLD OF SUPERNATURALS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The Dhimals have profound belief in supernatural powers. They are not idolaters Their religious beliefs and usages can be compared with the religion of Rgvedic Age whose main essence is the Supreme power of Nature.[1]

There is no word 'Dharma' in the vocabulary of Dhimali language, as in the lauguages of other local Hiudu caste groups. In Dhimal society, they use the word 'Dharmapali' (meaning-to perform charity). According to their beliefs, by worship of their **'Jourage'** (ancestral deities), they can get rid of all evils and miseries and obstacles of life. They explicitly try to follow the beliefs and practices that their ancestors had observed and prescribed to appease all types of supernatcurals. As such, these customs religious belief and practies permeate their whole chain of socio-cultural institutions, as yet.

Supernatural power is considered as an impersonal force in the Dhimal society. They totally believe that beauty, health, wealth, children, good harvest, miseries and death are the effect of either the grace or displeasure of supernatural power. They have no conception of images and shapes of these supernatural powers. According to their traditions, these customary beliefs are the outcome of famine, draught, bad agricultural produce, causes of death of their cattle and pigs, robbery of wealth and all other misfortunes, which they believe are the functions of these impersonal entities Their beliefs and religious customs and practices are found in abstract forms and they are not ready to hear any scientific or logical discussions. They believe in fate, good-deeds and charity like their Hindu counterparts. They strongly believe that the maker of destiny or fate is God. To them, deities gods and goddesses are all synonymous. They believe that it is by the will of these deities and gods and when they so like, they become prosperous and prestigious.

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[1] Basth, A. (1463) : The Religions of India. The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies. Val.XXV, Varanasi, India, p, 7.

Religious works and sins are assessed in different forms by the Dhimals. The person who worships his deities regularlly and does not bother his fellowmen, is a religious man. It is sinful to have sexual relationship with virgin (Kumari) girls and some other married women. Dhimal women regard their religion (dharma) is to live in chastity, and not to take cooked food from other communities They believe that acts of charity and sin are discernible and rewarded or punished, here in this earth. The person indulging in theft, crime and cheating is bound to live in the earth like the wandering souls after their death. The charitable person, who always performs his duty and good deeds, goes to other place, other than earth, where there are no visions of sins and charity. There is no word as 'heaven' in Dhimal vocabulary But they told that after death, they go to heaven due to the process of acculturation they have undergone now. The Hindus in their midst now exert consistent impact on their social behaviour and religious life. Some older people among them are planning to visit India for pilgrimage. They state that those who are sinners, are liable to get punishment on earth itself. There are many folk-stories and riddles regarding the punishment given to a man for incestuous relation by the terror of trampling by wild elephant. Therefore, it is probable that they were conscious of sins, punishment and charity even before the formation of their rigid cultural identity.

Gods deities, and impersonal powers of Dhimal society are not yet documented in any forms of printed books. The knowledge about them are handed down to them from their forefathers, from generation to generation. These are so intermingled with their surroundinge and social institutions, that they cannot be differentiated easily even from the geneology of clans and lineages. They propitiate with reverence and fear all the ancestral spirits, household spirits and village deities according to seasonal variations. All these supernatural entites can be divided into following four kinds: —

(1) Sakodir or Household God.

(2) Jourage or ancestral deity.

(3) Gramdir or village deity.

(4) Gods ana goddesses assimilated from the Hindu pantheon.

Sakodir : The deity and God of household :

In the Dhimal society, images of Kali, Devi and Masan are mainly kept and worshipped as household god now. The Dhimals call them as **'Sakodir'.** Each of this is also known as family god and is placed at the eastern corner of the main house, on a small elevated mound of earth, shaped into the form of a shrine or temple. Whenever there is sickness in a family or an accident, the causes are ascertained by divination and these deities are worshipped by burning incense. The Dhimals prefer to have two separate houses[1]—one as the main house (living room), another as Kitchen, because there is always the possibility of contact between the two kinds of opposing deities. Whenever any misfortune befalls on any separate house of a brother, the 'Sakodir' must be propitiated in the main house. Three types of goddess Kali Chamsari, Blind Kali and Honest Kali are worshipped by the Dhimals It is believed that if Chamsari is angry, diarihoea occurs and hence She must be worshipped with animal sacrifice with a bottle of wine (**Gora**) for cure. If She is not pleased the intestine of the victim gradually begins to lose blood, and the man may die. If She casts her ferocious eyes, then blindness occurs to a man. If one tries to encounter with Her, facial paralysis will appear slowly. Blind Kali causes blindness and Honest Kali causes stomach and body pain. These Kalis are worshipped annually during 'Sirijat Puja' and Tihar, but if they seem to become very furious at any time, immediate worship of the deity is performed. Otherwise any kind of trouble or mishap may visit the household. Likewise, the deities of 'masan' or burial ground, are also regularly propitiated.

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[1] Main house is separate form the kitchen.

Gramdir : The Village Deity and God :

Different names are attributed in different villages to the village deity or 'Gramdir'. The Dhimals intelligently demarcate the area of each 'Gramdir' according to the nature of the village. Similar names of deities are found in different Dhimal villages. Each village community have their Gramdir in their village. Naming of Gramdir's shrine is made according to the name of the village itself, e. g. Jimigram, Jambujhar and Tulasigram. Jimigram has five shrines, where the village deities are ritually propitiated. These are called Maharajsthan (Shrines of Maharaj).

Shrines of **Gramdir** are constructed in a simple fashion. The four sides of the shrines have the structure of a trident. In-between these four tridents, the flat timbers are inserted. The roof is made of corrugated iron sheet and sometimes by straw. A small bell is hung at the eastern corner of the shrine. The bell is tied with a thread or cloth of white, black, red and green colour. No idol or image is kept in these shrines. But images of horse and elephant made of clay are worshipped in 'Sirijat Puja' or other festivals. These images are destroyed or thrown away, as soon as the worship is completed. The shrines of Limbu and Rai community also similarly consists of tridents, and a bell hung by coloured thread, like the Dhimal shrines. These tridents are the emblem of Siva (Hindu God). Rais and Limbus believe that the Siva worshipped by Hiudus is nothing but the incarnation of Kiraestswar (the Mahadev or siva of Kirati people). That is why

Budha Subba[卐] is worshipped by the Dhimals and the Limbus in the form of Siva (Mahadev). But the Dhimals do not consider 'trident' as the emblem of Siva. According to them 'trident' (**trisul** is the living name of Maharaj (God), and is not the sign of Kirati, but is a Hindu God, who wears sacred thread.

The shrines and gods of the villages manifest the rationalistic form related mainly to ritual ceremonies and the mode of their performance in the Dhimal society. Thus the worship of Gramdls represents cultural dependence, rather than a religions formality. These village deities are propitiated twice, once in 'Sirijat (Ashade) Puja, and next in Tihar (Parba) festival. They are respectfully worshipped collectively with contribution from all the households of the Dhimal villages.

The deities and gods worshipped in Sirijat or during **Ashare** Puja and Tihar are similar. The deities worshipped in **Sirijat** Puja are as follows :—

(1) Maharaj (Rahasti)

(2) Budha Subba (Bhimsen)

(3) Radharam (Dharampal, Dharam Thakur, Garam Thakur and Chowdhury Thakur)

(4) River Berang (Khola Berang)

(5) Bera Gelai

(6) Sansari

(7) Choumaji

(8) Dharni Berang (Hearth Deity or God)

(9) Kali, Devi and Masan

(10) Shikari

(11) Bahadur Chowdhary and (12) Arjun Dhami

[卐] Budha Subba is the Chief God of Rais and Limbus of Nepal. **Samadhi** or temple of this god is situated in a small foot-hill of Dharan in the District of Sunshari, Kosizone, East Nepal. It is about 75 Km. from Damak Bazar.

Budha Subba is regarded as the very powerful, living god. So many people offer blood sacrifice of goats, hens etc, to him.

The following deities are again worshipped in Tihar festival i.e. in Dipavali in November :—

(1) Maharaj (Rahasti)
(2) Budha Thakur (Bhimsen)
(3) Radharam (Dharampal, Dharam Thakur, Garam and Chowdhary Thakur)
(4) Khola Berang (River Mai)
(5) Deragelai
(6) Sansari
(7) Choumajhi
(8) Dharni Berang (Hearth God)
(9) Kali, Devi and Masan
(10) Jouragelai
(11) Jalkumari (Kupa Kupaini)
(12) Ghatghatuwar
(13) Dwari (Gate-keeper)
(14) Lasami Berang
(15) Gwal King and Queen
(16) Bahadur Chowdhary

Household deities worshipped in every house entails very little expense. But in the case of village deities, a huge sum has to be spent, which is met by collection of subscriptions from the village.

Maharaj :

In every Dhimal village, there are three to five smaller shrines of various shape and size. It may be called a temple complex. Among these shrines, Maharaj has the smallest shrine. The Dhimals are not certain about the origin of this god. But they ascertain that this god wears a sacred thread and is khatriya by lineage. Blood sacrifice of pig and hen are tabooed in the worship of Maharaj.

This indicates they regard this god as very sacred. Maharaj, according to the Dhimals has seven brothers. They do not know the names of all these brothers, but one of them is Rahasati Maharaj. The Maharaj is propitiated for getting individual security and prosperity.

Budha Thakur :

He is believed and regarded as the strongest among the gods and deities propitiated by the Dhimals. Some regard him as Bhimsen, but not as the famous brother of the Pandavas, as described in the Mahabharat. According to them, he is the god who appeared before Parvati or Durga Kali, when she was about to destroy the world in anger. He is thus a form of Siva or Mahadev to the Dhimals, in disguise of Bhimsen. He is worshipped with the offering of blood sacrifice during Sirijat and Aunsi (Tihar) Puja and festival. During household puja, Budha Thakur is worshipped in a corner of the verandah. A young pig is sacrificed and betel-nuts and flowers and fruits are offered to him. Every member of the Dhimal society prays to him for bestowing strength, health and prosperity during this worship.

Radha Ram :

Dharam Pal, Dharam, Garam and Chowdhary Thakur :

Radha Ram is worshipped in the forms of Dharampal, Dharam, Garam and Chowdhary Thakur. They cannot tell as to why the same god is worshipped in different names and forms. It seems, since different groups of Dhimal people used to live in different areas previously, these names were given to this deity by them, in different ecological and social settings. Though they say, these gods and deities are similar and the same, even then they offer different types of animals to these differently named gods and deities. For example, they offer a white cock (male) to Dharam

Thakur, a pigeon to Garam Thakur (of any colour) and a cock and a pigeon are offered to Chowdhary Thakur. During 'Sirijat Puja', a red horse of baked clay is offered to Dharam Thakur along with a red pigeon, which is a compulsory offering, Radharam is among the first categories of deities, who is propitiated in the Dhimal households. They believe that he is the god who helps to catch good fishes. He is the destructor and creator of the world. But when angry, he causes intensive pain in one's back and so he is daily propitiated.

Choumajhi :

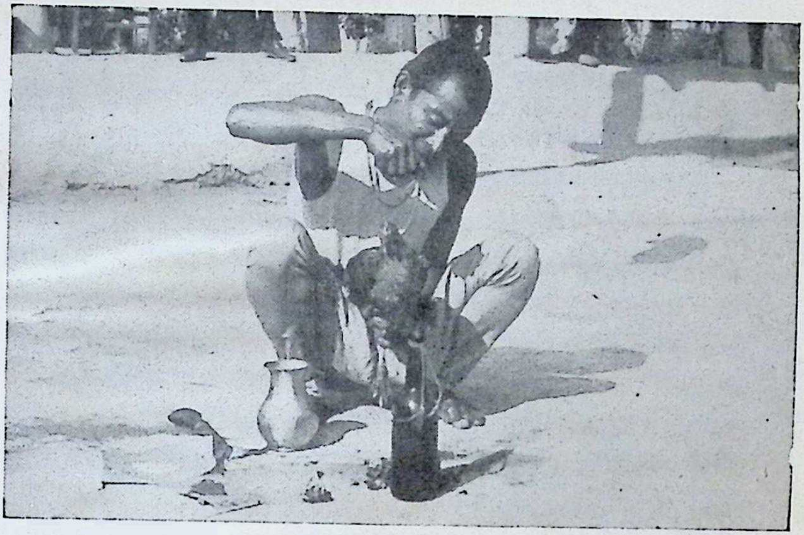
Choumajhi system is a social institution of the Dhimals, where domestic quarrels, divorce cases, division of property, cases of property, cases of theft and adultery are settled by the Village Headman and some other imporant personalities, including youths. Choumajhi has also a respected place in Dhimal religious practices. It is worshipped by name during Ashade and Parba Puja by offering a red cock. Choumajhi is regarded as an affinal brother of Budha Thakur by them.

Sansari :

This deity is propitiated immediately ofter some evil incident has taken place in any Dhimal family. It is also propitiated during Ashade Puja and Tihar. A pigeon tinged with red and white colour is essentially required for sacrifice to please this deity. Samsari is worshipped to get rid of fever, influenza cholera and plague.

Kholaberang or the River Goddess :

All the goddesses are 'berangs' (river), and these 'berangs' are considered as Goddess Durga by the Dhimals. Among all the 'berangs'. Mai, Timai, Lahoe, Godne and Kankai, though are river goddesses, are Durga to the Dhimals. The most important 'berang' is the river Kankai located near east of Damak bazar. According to Dhimal traditions and beliefs, there are altogether



Pleasing Supernatural Powers by animal sacrifice

seven sisters of the 'berang' Konkai. A clay horse is offered in Sirijat Puja and a duck is offered to Konkai river. She is also offered a hen during Tihar. Konkai is regarded as Mother Goddess and offering of pig to her is a taboo. It is believed that small-pox can be evaded, if she is worshipped. Vows are made to her and offerings of animals, such as, lamb, duck, hen and pigeon are regularly made to fulfil such vows. **Panchabali** (blood sacrifice of five different kinds of animals) is also made sometimes, to get a son. Worship of all the rivers branching out from Tista (east) and Koshi (west) including these two rivers is regularly made. It is interesting to see that most of these rivers are situated tc east of Konkai Mai river. This gives us sufficient evidence to say that the Dhimals were previously settlers of East Nepal and never of West Nepal.

Shikari (The Hunter God) :

It is a deity of the forests and hills when the Dhimals were in a semi-nomadic stage of their social development. Shikari must have been their principal god. Since they were not agriculturists at that time, they were fully dependent for their subsistence on the flesh of the hunted games and wild fruits of the forests. This deity is offered an egg and the head of a black hen during Ashade Puja.

Dera Gelai :

This is a most ferocious deity of the Dhimals. She is the Goura Parvati-consort of Mahadev. To them Goura is a witch and she is always in the habit of getting angry at trifling lapses. She is worshipped along with Bhimsen. The Dhimals believe that there are many such witches in their villages. They generally afflict the children, old people and sometimes also the young men and women. If some one is sick, a pair of duck or hen must be offered to appease her. This flesh is then distributed to all villagers to avoid such afflictions.

Jouragela :

Jouragela is a cook. He cooks the food and rice during Sirijat Festival. He is offered an egg and a hen for his services. These offerings must be made if one want to eat or cook delicious or tasty meals himself. Otherwise, they believe, he won't be able to do this.

Bahadur Chowdhary :

He is offered a black goat.

Arjun Dhami :

Arjun Dhami is regarded as the ancestral deity of the Dhimals.

All these deities are propitiated in order to maintain the Dhimal society as strong as in the past and its traditional norms intact.

Deities, religious practices and beliefs adapted under Hindu influence :

Some deities have been newly adopted by the Dhimals according to the religious beliefs and practices of the Hindu pantheon. They say proudly to other Hindus, that their gods and deities are equivalent and as powerful as those of their Hindu neighbours. They worship snakes, as **Naga** and **Nagini** like the Hindus. They worship and pray to Hanuman for having, good, clear and sunny seasons. The Dhimals regard '**fire**' as Brahma Devata. Like other Hindus, a heap of grains is worshipped as **Anna Devata.** They worship the rain god Indra, as the Hindus worship the sky god. The birth of Kamini, according to the Dhimals is said to be that she flied to the sky in order to kill the child Krishna, born of Devaki.

The Dhimal people, like the Limbus and the Rais community, visit the Dharan temple to worship Budha Subba with offerings of amimal sacrifice with blood, while in Vijayapur (Dharan), they also visit the temples of other Hindu Gods and Goddesses. They believe that their Budha Thakur is one of the form of Budha Subba. In this way, the Dhimals worship Bishnu and his consort as Budha Thakur and Lasami.

Dhimals who have no child, visit the Hindu temples of Varanasi and Pasupati Nath in Kathmandu for worship like their neighbouring Hindu villagers. Such a Dhimal couple visited the Pasupati Temple on pilgrimage to pray for getting a son. Luckily they were blessed with a son after a year of their visit. They felt that they were blessed with the son because Lord Pasupati was pleased with them.

Recently the Dhimals are immitating the rituals and practices of the Hindus and they now perform 'Shradha' (after death rituals) of their dead family members. They also hear the Divine Anecdotes of Satyanarayan Puja and the Puranas. They offer **Dasdan**卐 (gift of ten kinds) when their parents die, like other Hindus living in the periphery of their settlements.

Though the Dhimal society has started to perform many Hindu rituals and ceremonies, but still they do not celebrate the biggest National Festivals like, **Dasain** (Durga Puja) and Deepavali, Makar Sankranti, Srawan Sankranti and Ram Nawami, as their Hindu friends do. At present they eat meat and good foodstuffs on such days and say to their Hindu neighbours and villagers they too have celebrated the festivals with joy and happiness.

Witch-crafts, Spirits and Shamanism :

To the Dhimals, the world of spirits, the animistic universe, cannot be radically separated from the mundane world. Witches are both male and female. they believe. They attribute the causes of illness and other troubles which disrupt the normal flow of

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卐 In Das Dan : Of the ten Kinds of gifts needed for the death ritual, one is given to the priest.

life, to some malign acts of the spirits and ghosts inhabiting the world.

Primarily the links with Dhimal animism and concepts of illness are gods, spirits, witches and ancestors, who generally live in the atmosphere and the earth. Any of these gods or spirits may cause illness, if their territory is encroached, their shrine disturbed, or if one fails to pay proper homage to them. As the gods, spirits and witches are believed to afflict and cause illness, they are regularly worshipped to protect the individuals and grant favour. A dead man's soul may also become ghost or spirit, if the funeral rites are not done or properly performed. These ghosts and evil spirits are believed to be the souls of the people who die in an unnatural way or by accident.

Witches, however, are 'living people', whose identity is never disclosed for fear of avenge.

There are Shamans or **Ojhas** in the Dhimal society. In the process of diagnosis of the cause of a disease or ghost-possession, the Shaman performs some magical rites and ascertain it, and counter it by magical means.

Witches are said to collect things (like a piece of finger-nail, hair or clothing of the intended victim) or draws up his effigy on the ground and cause some specific physical or mental harm to these objects, to cause similar misfortune to the victim. When such attack by a witch is dangerous, the Shaman tries to determine who the witch is ? Often there are hints – e. g. allegations are made against some old woman of a near or distant village for causing such harm, but her identity could not be properly determined. Sometimes spirits also cause illness to one by causing fright.

Tha Shaman does not perform any worship for treating natural illness. If the case is very serious, he recommends to the inmates to arrange for modern medical treatment of the patien. Since precise boundaries do not exist between natural and spirit–

caused illness, it seems that their diagnostic determinations are based only on experience or intuition. The Dhimal informants told that they intuitively know what cases could be treated successfully by natural means, and what could not be. Those patients who are seriously ill and incapacitated, are generally advised to undergo modern medical treatment.

Gould (1957 : 508) set forth a division of role and responsibility between a doctor and a folk-healer in Northern India in his study, which seems to apply generally to the Dhimal (based on this field observation). According to Gould :—

'Critically disabling illnesses are the province of the modern doctor, and illness which allow the sufferer to maintain a semblance of his daily routine, are the realm of the Shaman.',

The present author had also found that those illness which were chronic, either persisting or progressing, were recommended for treatment by doctors. The Shamans, it appeared, were concerned with those sudden onset of acute illness that had no apparent external cause.

The religious beliefs, customs and rituals and ceremonies in Dhimal society are, to some extent, similar to those of the Rais and Limbu Society of Nepal. **Trisul** i.e iron trident bells and colourful cloths or threads are tied on the shrines and temples of the Dhimals, as done by the Rais and Limbus of Eastern Nepal. No idolator is seen in both these communities. Animal sacrifice is essential in community worships and festivals. Liquor and mutton are the main food in any festival or worship. **Trisul** is emblem of Maharaj, in the Dhimal society. Likewise, the Athpa-ria Rais and Limbus also believe in their God Marga as Maharaj (Dahal, 1972). It supports the view of religious affinity between these communities. The process and practices, rituals and ceremonies observed during the worships are akin to the other Mongolian groups of Nepal. The animal sacrifice in any popular community worship or festival is compulsory. Animals sacrificed during such religious performaces include pigs, lambs, chicken and eggs of hen and duck. Beer and wine are also essential for purificatory and mourning feasts. Drinks offered to the gods and goddesses by the Rais and Limbus consist mainly of wine and bear as offered by the Dhimals. There are people like Dhami. Ojha in the Dhimal society for propitiating the gods and goddesses for getting their help or favour, while there are periests, Biduwa nnd Fedange people among the Rais and Limbus to do such worships. Only the difference betwoon the Limbus and Dhimals is that while the former eat beef, the latter never take it.

The Dhimal sociey is also beset with elements of fear affliction and happiness and institutions of religious performances to combat or appease evil forces and deities, in their social system and cultural life like many other communites of Nepal.

In short, the essencce or religious institutions, traditions, beliefs and practices are related to impersonal supernatural power and forces. Whenever they are confronted with a mishap or disease and unable to understand the causes of such events, they say that gods have done these. They believe in fate and charity. They inherit these traditions and observe the modes of ancestral worship from generation to generation. The main process of worshipping the gods and deities is to offer sweets and fruits to them and sacrifice animals and scatter wine, beer or water around the temple. There is no written document or scripture containing the rules or their religious activities. They learn the processes of religious performances by oral transmission, folk-songs and riddles from one generation to other.

They have adapted some Hindu religious customs and rituls recently and the ceremonies and worships like Satyanarayan Puja, Sradha, Kanyadan bestowring daughter ceremony during marriage of their daughters, putting vermilion-mark on the bride's forehead, observance of which are incresing among them. These cultural changes are remarkable, but they have adjusted these according to their mode of life and culture to preserve their own identity. They are simple and cannot divide their religious practices into any brand of religion like, Buddhism, Chrstianity, Hinduism, etc. They do not believe in non-violence and salvation.

The beliefs and practices of Dhimal Society go to lend support to the view that the beginning of their religion has to be sought in the recognition of impersonal forces, which they endeavour to control by magic, and that personal gods appeased by prayers sacrifices are a later development, and that the deification of Chiefs and Ancestors is probably the latest stage of all such religious formulations–a stage reached, may be by pursuance of their ambitous semi-religious fictions, which commenced by claiming certain gods and deities as their ancestors, and ended by transformion some ancestors into gods.

It has been stated earlier the Dhimals regard nature as the supreme power or God and have profound belief in supernatural powers. They neither worship any idol, nor have they any inquisitiveness to know them in depth, rationally and philosophically. These days, they are attracted to the manifold religious activities of the Hindus and have accepted some of their gods and goddesses as their own deities.[1] As such, they say, it is not desirable to tell them Hindus, though they say their religion is Hinduism. Their religious beliefs and usages can be compared with the religion of Rgvedic age, whose main concept of God was the Supreme Power of Nature[2].

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1. Unpublished manuscripts of Rameswar Mahato (P. 6).

2. Basth, 1963 A :—The Religions of India. The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Studies, Vol, XXV, Varanasi, India, 1963, p. 7.

The Dhimal society distinguishes two types of their deities and gods for propitiation for various purposes, They are :– (i) Village Deity, and (ii) Household Deity.

The Kali, Devi and Masan (God of the Crematory ground) are mainly propitiated and respected as their household deities. A few Dhimal-also worship Chansari and Bisari as their household deities.

Rajdharam or Dharam Thakur, Budha Thakur (Bhimsen) Rasmari, Mai (river) Parvati, Maharaj, Bageswari (Durga), Byemajhi, Choumajhi, Deragai, Kiyakhotar, Shikari, Dhami, Diabairanga are mainly worshipped as the Village Deities (Gram Davata) collectively. Village deities are worshipped collectively in community festivals, whereas household deities are worshipped individually in each Dhimal house.

The Dhimals believe that the cycles of human life as birth, marriage and death, diseases and calamities, prosperity, wealth and poverty–are linked with kindness or disfavour or casting of evil eyes by the various deities, and so they have been accepted as gods. In the same manner, the Dhimals, as an agricultural community, have linked many other deities with the agricultural seasons and festivals, to please them for getting better yields; worship them for commuuity protection and family prosperity and security. For example, the main festival of the Dhimals, 'Sirijat Puja or 'Ashade Puja' is celebrated just before the monsoon during the month of Jestha-A‘had (May-June). Budha-Thakur (Bhimsen) is propitiated for the occurrence of timely rain. Similarly, another festival 'Naubangi Puja' is celebrated before harvesting the paddy as a token of prayer for having a good yield for the current as well as the next year. In this festival (Puja in their own term), new rice is at first given to the deity and then it is taken as **'prasad'** or consecreted food. Therefore, we see that the forces of Supernatural Power, both in malevalent and benevolent forms have been incorporated into their culture, as they believe, these affect them from birth to death, and even after death. Hence the various deities are worshipped according to seasons and the connected festivals are observed in a joyful spirit.

There are many kinds of feasts or celebrations, fairs and festivals in the Dhimal society. These feasts, (worships) and festivals have helped them to unite together in the socio-cultural, religious and economic life. All the clansmen, affinals and consanguinals heartily participate in these and contribute whatever they can during such worships or festivals. They give importance and emphasis on food and drink. In a way, they spend a greater part of their life in eating, drinking, gossiping and merriment thus. The Dhimals offer rice, curry, pulses pork and drinks to the deities and eat these lavishly during these festivals and celebrations.

In this way, the Dhimals celebrate their festivals and worships in two levels. i. e, on community basis and household basis. There are festivals like, (i) Sirijat' and (ii) Naubangi' which are community festivals. The household festivals comprise mainly parba, Suruwa, Fagu. During commnity festivals, other, local inhabitants are also seen to participate, where as the household festivals, worships etc are celebrated only by the family members.

Sirijat or Ashade Puja and Dhang Dhange fair occupy a special position in the Dhimal society. These are Community worhips and festivals. In this worship, each member of the village settlements or household among the Dhimals must participate. Otherwise he is punished and fined and has to pay it in kind or cash. These festivals start form Jestha (May-June) and end on the last day of Ashad (June–July). Since this festival commences in the month of **Ashad,** it is also papularly known as 'Ashade puja'. An equal amount of money is paid as subscription by each household, irrespective of their social rank and economic status This type of subscription or contribution is known as **'Behari'** in Dhimal society. In some villages, after the celebration of 'Sirijat or 'Ashade puja', another fair called 'Dhang Dhange Mela' is held in the evening. The date of this Mela is fixed in consultation with the neighbouring Dhimal villages, so that such fair is not held in any other village on that day, in order to attract a large gathering. As there is no overlapping, every villager could participate in such fair. During the time of worship in 'Sirijat', the Dhimal women are not allowed to participate to maintain their dignity, as the adults consume a large quantity of wine and get highly intoxicated and misbehave during this festival. They, however get the 'prasad' or (consecrated food) in their house. But in the fair of Dhange Dhange every Dhimal girl dresses herself up in a bright fashionable manner and visists the fair, because it is customary in the Dhimal society to select brides by the young boys during this Mela, since time immemorial.

This festival is held to perform a variety of both social and religious functions. For example, it provides and oppertunity for the boys and girls of different villages to meet together; and sometimes marriages are negotiated by them personally in case of choice, in such meeting. Besides, many rituals performed in these fairs and festivals are community rituals, which create an atmosphere of developing common beliefs and help to transmit their customary sacred traditions.

During this ceremony, figurines of clay elephants are offered to the deity. They touch the loin-cloth of the deity; eat **'Purichaka'** (heads of sacrficed animals); and do 'Chijurauka' (Sprinkling holy water on the image of the deity). Lastly, a competition of drum-beating is held in it. Wooden logs (fuel) of about one maund used to be collected by the prospective groom and presented to each of his would-be parent-in-law, Village Majhi, Dhami and landlord in the past on such ocasion. These firewoods are later used during 'Sirijat puja'. The quantity of wood thus collected could be used to meet the needs for about four to five months of an average Dhimal family. But these days, the prospective grooms of the Dhimal society only offer to their own parentin-law, carrying these woods either on head or shoulder, before a day. This is a gift or presentation and is given as assistance to diminish this contingent imarriage expenditure of the father-in-law's family.

This is acknowledged and accepted as the most respected and prestigious gift in the Dhimal society. Along with the would be groom making such gift, other people are invited for meal on a day within the month of Ashad (June-July). The expenses of food offered with drink and meat are generally much more than the cost of the wood presented. 'Sirijat' means the worship of the Dhimal society which commences just at the beginning of paddy cultivation. In a word, it can be said as the worship of land (**Bhumi Puja**). This ceremony is held on a particular date fixed by the villagers, generally in a shrine of the village. Only the men can worship the deity inside the shrine during this ceremony. Contributions in cash and kind are collected from the villagers under the order of the Headman according to their tradition The cash and goods so collected per family amount to Rs. 5/- to Rs.10/- on the average. The money is spent for purchase of the materials requir ed for the worship. The sacrificial animals and other materials,such as, pig, fowls, pigeon and oil, rice, vermilion etc. are bought from the market by the money contributed by the households. The deities and gods and goddesses like, Dharmathakur, Laxmi, Bhimsen, Mai river and parvati are worshipped. A white pigeon is sacrificed as offering to Dharmathakur, a male-goat to Rasmi, a red-cock to Bhimsen, a pig to Mai river, a hen to Laxmi, a pigeon to the village daity, a cock to Dhami, a black Cock (male) to Bahadur chowdary, a cock to Derage and Shikari. It is difficult to observe and ascertain what different colour and sex are required for sacrificial animals for the different deities, but it seems that generally the male deities are offered male animals, and the female deties, the female ones. A black colour animal is, however, offered to ferocious deities like, Bahadur Chowdhary. The expenditure is met by collection of subscriptions from Dhimal families.

Worship of the village deity is performed by the Dhami, to protect the village from any disaster, to get good crops from the cultivated fields; for timely rainfall, and to ensure that all the children remain healthy. The Dhimal society has a firm conviction that in the past the Raj Dhami of the village used to protect the villagers from the wild animals, such as, wild cows, buffaloes, rhinoceroses, elephants, leopards etc. by charms and mantras, and he also protected the agricultural crops from pests and animals thus, such worship is performed in the village shrines of all deities and gods by the Raj Dhami at different times, for different purposes.

Firstly, the God Dharmathakur is propitiated, then Bhimsen, and lastly serveral other deities are worshipped. The Dhimals regard Goddess Laxmi as their mother. She is not offered any animal sacrifice, but a lump of mixed rice and vermilion is kept on a banana-leaf with wine and water as offering during her worship. The Raj Dhami while worshipping her, loudly utters–'You are the Supreme and Head of all Deities, and hope for our future entirely rests on you.' After the worship is over, all villagers assemble there and take the mixed banana and rice as 'prasad' i. e (consecrated food). This consecrated food is distributed to each of the families of the village. The representatives of each family must be present at this worship to take the 'prasad'. Otherwise, the absentees are criticised and even punished by imposition of a fine, at times.

The Dhimals are not aware about the significance of this festival in their religion. After the worship is over, the boys start playing the drums (Dhols) before they return to the village, by singing the famous song–

'Chenga chenga Benga Benga'.[1] These drums have their own melody an music and significance. They believe that whenever a drum is beaten, rain falls. So the drums are beaten during the monsoon, that is in the month of Ashad (July), when every villager is ready for paddy cultivation. They believe that the harvest may be destroyed if they do not beat the drum with offerings of wine (**gora**) and animal sacrifice. The Newars of Kathmandu valley also beat the 'Indra Baja'[2] similarly, to please the deity of the sky for offering rain.

The men are only allowed to come to worship, but the women are allowed to attend the Dhang Dhange Mela only. The songs are sung before the young girls by the young boys. These songs are tinged with enermous sentiments and themes of sex and reproduction.[2] There are two versions of oral tradition regarding the origin and significance of these songs in the Dhimal society. In one tradition, these songs are said to have been written long before the time, when the enemies first invaded their territory and were defeated and driven out unitedly. Another oral tradition is that by such songs, Budha and Laxmi (here the consort of Budhathakur) are invited to their villages for ensuring general welfare. These songs are intimately connected with the agricultural activities of the Dhimal community. Through this long song, the help of the dead ancestors living in the form of gods and goddesses in the heaven is invoked, and they get pleased and ensure good rainfall. Thus the villagers are saved from famine, as the rain caused by their grace, gives them a good yield of various crops and grains.

When the procession singing this song proceed into the village, every one from the top of the main entrance of each house, pours water from a pitcher (earthen-pot) on them. This custom of

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1. Nepali, G. S. 1965 : Newars.
2. The song is very long.

singing and pouring of water is also found among the Newars of Kathmandu valley and elsewhere in Nepal.[1] The pouring of water is the symbolic gesture of rainfall. All the village people then play in the water in merriment and dance on the muddy surface of the road. Some also dance with open sword. Then home-made beer stored in a big clay jar and a bottle of wine (gora) are served to the troupe of dancers. This is a great event in the annual festivals of the Dhimal society. The significance of singing is that, they have brought the God Budhathakur and his consort Laxmi as guests. So the beer and wine are offered to them as sign of respect and hospitability to the guests. The most pronounced tradition of the Dhimal society is that they welcome the guests, whoever comes to their house, with utmost respect, hospitability and good foodstuffs and heavy drinks.

In this manner, when collected in fifty houses, each house giving one full clay-pot containing about 20 litres of wine or beer, the total amounts to a thousand litres, which is later consumed in a feast. Those persons who do not want to go with the procession give about 2 litres of water to the Dhami from their house. If this is done, they would be allowed to drink wine in the shrines, if they so wish.

Whatever the system may have been in the past, each village household at present, must contribute a clay-pot containg twenty litres of rice beer and a bottle containing one and half litre of wine (gora).

When they complete visiting all the houses, one member of the house as the representative stay awake in the shrine on that day. This is known as **'Jagban'** in Dhimal language. Those who are not present in the night among them, are fined Rs. 5/- and a bottle of wine. The wine and beer collected by the procession and the meat and heads of the animals sacrificed and offered in the Puja are then distributed among them and a hearty feast is held there.

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3. G. S. Nepali—1965 'Newars', p. 42

Next morning they leave the shrine and visit the village houses again. They play their traditonal instruments 'Urni' and 'Dhol' and walk through the village roads and pathways. People come out to listen the sweet sound of **'Urni'** and **'Chabrung'** (drum). Again they offer them a clay-pot of beer and a bottle of wine. They play on the wet mud, drinking the wine at intervals. If the head of any household was not present at the temple for the whole last night, he is dragged out forcibly from his house and is smeared with mud all over his body by way of fun. If he does not open the door, even the door is broken by the angry and drunk young men and he is dragged out. This traditional festival ends after this procession have visited all the houses of the village.

These days, Dhang Dhange Mela is not held in all the Dhimal settlements. When the date of this festival is fixed by consultation with other villages. it is notified by beating of Dhol (drum) from the main centre of the village. Thus the fair or festival is completed and the Ashade Puja is performed in the evening. In the past, women took part in dance, while men played the 'Dhols'. But the tradition has changed, and now men themselves are found to dance. Persons belonging to higher Hindu castes participate in it. Though such participants often contribute for the feast, but the Dhimal people are reluctant to welcome them. As a whole, we see that there have been marked changes in the mode of rituals, ceremonies and institutional usages and the structure of the Dhimal society, though there is no change in their mode of feasts, food habits and drinks.

Procuring or eating of new grains or crops is known as 'Noubangi' in the Dhimal society. This festival is similar to the 'Nwagi' or first-feeding of new grains of other higher Hindu castes of Nepal. This festival is celebrated just before the harvesting of paddy, usually in the month of Mangsir (November). It can also be celebrated after reaping the paddy of the fields. Nobody is allowed to eat new grains or other crops till this ceremony or ritual worship is performed. This festival is celebrated by the community, as a whole. The subscriptions and contributions of money and materials are arranged to be collected by some elderly gentlemen of the village. Each household donates either in cash or in goods. Now-a-days, this celebration is not held separately. It has been abandoned, and is performed together with the 'Sirijat Puja. The abandonment has been forced by economic causes. The change in celebration, according to the Dhimals, is to cut down double expenses. However whatever may be their economic condition, they must have to propitiate and offer promised blood sacrifice to their household deity, kali, Devi, and Masan with other ancestral deities, for without their worship, the Dhimals would never eat new grains. Generally Monday or Friday is chosen as auspicious day for the celebration of this festival. The worship is performed in the shrine of the village. The methods of Naubangi worship celebration slightly differ from one locality to other. But everywhere, animal sacrifice is compulsory Many people from other communities also take part in it, as. the counterparts of Dhimal brothers and sisters. This is the sign of acceptance of the friendship of other communities and opening of a wider horizon in the socio-cultural institution of the Dhimals.

Parba Puja : In Dhimal society, 'Parba' is the main family festival, which is universally celebrated like the **Deepavali**[1] of the Hindus. It is celebrated from the day the Hindu castes celebrate the Deepavali or Tihar. They call it also as 'Aunshi Puja', as it is celebrated on the darkest day of the moon. This festival is celebrated upto the end of the month. On the next day of 'Aunshi', all the members of the family assemble in the main household. In the morning, the houses are cleaned with cowdung and water. In one place, an imitation shrine is made where ancestral spirits and family gods are worshipped. No animal is sacrificed in the household worship. This shows that they have made some distinctions between the houshold deities and public deities as to whom they should give blood sacrifice and to whom not. Many Dhimals propitiate deities like Kali, Devi and Masan. These deites are considered dangerous by them, and they think that without their permission, no external or outsider can enter the house. If he disobeys the rules, his eyes are destroyed. Female members of the family can also worship these deities, only when there are no men in the house. Even the Dhami is debarred from entering the house.

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[1] Deepavali, which is also known as Tihar in Nepal is celebrated for five days in October-November. Its first day is for the worship of crow, second day for dog, third day for cow and Laxmi (Goddess of wealth), fourth day for ox, and the last day for one's own brother. Candles are lit in the houses at night during the last three days.

Along with this, the village deity is worshipped by offering blood sacrifice. After this worship, liquor and meat of pig are taken by them.

Next day, all the domesticatica animals are cleaned, bathed and are fed with green grass and other food. The surroundings of the house, cowshed, verandah, well, river, rivulet, crossings of the roads and paths are cleaned, worshipded and are offered co-ordial complement. The vermilion mixed with oil is smeared on them. All the agricultral implements are cleaned and worshipped and are smeared with vermilion

During Tihar, 'Deausi' (a game played by the Hindus) is played by the Dhimals. During this game, the Dhimal youths cut down and break the stems of banana plants. They want gift of food and contribution on this day. Crackers are burst these days instead of cutting the stems of banana plants. During this festival, feast is given to guests, whoever may come to the house. Generally meat, rice, pulses and liquor are supplied to them. Everybody is intoxicated with great joy. They do not take or eat any fruit of the forest on that day. It is taken only after this festival or 'Parba' is over.

Other festivals like. 'Siruwa' and **Fagu** (Holi) are also celebrated on the first day of Baisakh, which is also the New years day of the Nepalese people. This is rarely celebrated in Damak, unlike in Morang.

Rasmari, the God of hunting is also worshipped. During this festival, the Dhimal hunters believe that animals in the forest are not protected by Rasmari, as this Hunting God comes to visit the fair. So in his absence, games would be amply available and hunters would be definitely able to kill them. But the tragedy is that, all the forests adjoining the Dhimal villages no longer exist, and as such, no games are available there.

The Fagu (Holi) is also celebrated by them though it is the festival of the Hindus. But they celebrate this like the Rajbanshis Tharus and the tarai people. On this day, a special food called **'baber'** and **'chheli'** is prepared. They also entertain other guests. Holi is celebrated without the offerings of blood sacrifice, as it is not allowed by the rules of Hindu religion.

Hindu festivals are celebrated now by the Dhimals like the Hindus, because at present circumstances, they have to live among the people of different communities. Social, political and economic factors have made it necessary for the Dhimals to establish working relationships with the members of the Hindu community. Like many other ethnic groups in Nepal, the Dhimal people are also faced with the twin-problems of maintaining a spearate cultural identity, as well as establishing their place within the surrounding Hindu culture.

These festivals are the highlights of Dhimal tradition. The explicit reasons for celebrating these festivals are different, but there are some striking similarities underlying the rituals. Then again, in the worship of varied deities and gods related with Hindu Pantheon, sacrifices are the most needed item. By worshipping the Hindu deities in many forms, in these festivals, the Dhimal society seems to be asserting that they are a part of the Hindu socio-cultural system, but with a distinct separate cultural identity of their own. However, Hindu influence is clear in all these festivals. They are not merely emulating the external Hindu community by observing these festivals. They have not adopted these festivals as a whole, being alien traditions, but rather have woven the Hindu elements into some of their traditions. Even now the Sirijat' and 'Dhang Dhange Mela' and 'Naubangi worship or Festival' are distinctive Dhimal ceremonies and festivals. Even more interesting is the fact that the Dhimal people do not consider that the worship of Budhathakur as Mahadev and Laxmi, Bhimsen, Kali, Durga has been borrowed from the Hindus. Rather, they claim that such worships are rooted in ancient traditional Dhimal culture.

Thus it would appear that while the Dhimals have been adopting Hindu elements in their religious life, and are assimilating to some extent the new values that come along with such adoption, they are at the same time, asserting and retaining a separate and distinctive Dhimal identity. In any case, it is clear that the Dhimals do not view themselves as a 'tribal group emulating the Hindus', but have instead reinterpreted some Hindu traditions, as Dhimal traditions by the process of cultural assimilation that goes on everywhere in the world, for ages and ages.

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CHAPTER TEN

SOCIAL CHANGE : A PROCESS

The immediate effects of political changes and independence after 1950 among the Dhimals were almost none or very nominal from the point of view of increasing or lessening of village integrety. But in Post–1950 period, spread of western type of education and new economic opportunities, opening of the East-West Highway, migration of Hindu high castes from the hills, largely expedited by the opening of the **tarai** for new settlement of migrants, together have had a tremendous impact on the traditional socio-cultural and political system in Damak, and in the Dhimal society in particular. These forces have introduced new institutions and roles, and values and behaviour patterns, to support these roles.

Independence, and of late introduction of various socio-economic reforms after creation of the Panchayat System, have brought along some other factors in the wake, namely, the abolition of the rights of land held as intermediaries or the Zemindari system, abolition of **birta** (1959), road development, educational facilities and consciousness about the country beyond the boundary of the villages. The changes that have occurred in the recent past are found to have their root in the economic infrastructure, though these have affected their political and religious lives as well.

In the sphere of social life, the outlook of the Dhimal people in general have undergone certain changes, as a result. The traditional observances in day-to-day life are no more taken seriously. For example, the taboos for a pregnant woman are flouted so long as it does not directly lead to any actual physical harm of the woman.

The cultural changes among the higher castes point towards secularisation, the changes in the Dhimal culture, on the other hand, have been Brahmanical in nature. Srinivas's theory of Sanskritization' (1952, 1967, 1968), one of the most widely accepted theories of social change in the South Asian context, seems to be in well tune with some of the aspects of such social changes.[卐]

Following Srinivas, many anthropologists have used the concept of 'Sanskritization' in analysing socio-cultural changes among various groups in South Asia (e.g. Cohn, 1852; Gould, 1961; Haimendorf, 1966; Srivastava; 1971).

Sanskritization among the Dhimals has been a process that was set in motion over thirty years ago. The pre-1960 Sanskritization of the Dhimals was very limited. The culture of the Dhimals is largely based on what may be called as 'animism' and worship of non-Sanskritic gods and goddesses. But on account of their coming into contact with the high caste Hindus, their gradual consciousness and freedom from traditional bondage, spread of new ideas through the radio, newspapers and cinema, increasing rate of literacy among the new generations, and dissemination of the ideas and values of urban-culture through the migrated higher castes have together produced positive effects on their traditional way of life. Now they are not only following their traditional religious practices, but have also imbibed some new ideas and values of Hindu religion in their way of life.

[卐] Srinivas (1967 : 67-68) defines 'Sanskritization' as 'the process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, ritual beliefs, ideology and style of high and, in particular, a 'twice-born' (**dwija**) caste.'

To begin with, there are some rich and conscious Dhimal families, who have started indentifying themselves with the nexus of hierarchical social relations of the Hindu Caste system.

The most interesting change in Dhimal commensal practice has been the banning of the 'buffalo sacrifice' during funeral rites, a practice 'which was a must', as in the Limbu system. There has also been little changes in the Dhimal habit of keeping domesticated animals, specially cows and buffaloes. Before 1970 when this author visited some Dhimal villages, he found that they did not domesticate cows and buffaloes, for milk was not used by them. At present, milk of cow is considered a sacred item of offering to various deities, as found in Hindu practice. Moreover, they are selling milk to hotels and restaurants in the Damak market for cash to meet their needs.

Many Dhimals have started the religious worships and activities, such as, **Satyanarayan Puja** and reading of **Purana** (recitation of the Holy Texts), having been influenced by the Brahmins.

Many Dhimals have abandoned the traditional Dhimal burial custom and instead, have adopted the Hindu practice of cremation of the dead. Some of them have also started following the Brahminical practice of observing thirteen days of pollution after a death in the family, in place of their own traditional thre days observance. Some Dhimals even engage Brahmin priest, in lieu of the Dhimal **Barang** (priest) for performing funeral rites.

The system of marriage customs are also changing. In some places smearing of vermilion on the forehead of the bride and the Hindu system of 'Kanyadan' have been started. The Dhimal system and custom of paying 'bride-price' during the marriage is changing. Formerly the marriage rituals and feasts continued for three days. At present, it is completed within two days Along with the changes in wedding rituals, it is found that the circle of marriage relationships has been considerably widened than before. Two new additions are that—their new guests are even Brahmins who take pig's meat and liquor with them. Intercaste marriages are also increasing among the Dhimals now.

Srinivas (1968) has stressed that upper castes are modernising and secularising, while the middle and lower castrs are 'Sanskritizing' their behaviour. Srinivas's modification has been influenced by the studies of Gould (1961), and Cohn (1955). Cohn, whose publication preceded that of Gould's, in his 'Study of Camar and Rajput of Madhopur in North India', found that the Rajput, affected by western models of conduct, have become more individualised and secular. The Camar, an untouchable caste, on the other hand, seem to be adopting traditional rules of Hindu commensality, giving up occupations considered ritually defiling by high caste standards and generally adopting 'Sanskritic' elements of culture. Cohn further noted that 'Camars in Madhopur are trying to borrow and to revive for themselves, elements of a culture that the higher castes are shedding.'

Commenting on Cohn's study, Marriott (1955) remarks :– (Ibid : 76).

> 'One might say that the Camars strive to move into a culture and its associated status, which the Thakurs (Rajputs) have vacated. Social change in India is both a movement toward an urban and cosmopolitan mode of life, and also a revival and penetration downward of ancient Hindu elements of culture and religion' (Ibid : XIV).

The present author also feels that the theories of 'Sanskritization and 'Westernisation' forwarded by Srinivas, Cohn and others provide only a partial understanding of the socio-cultural changes that are taking place in Damak Panchayat In Damak itself Brahmin culture seems to be secularising, but not all Brahmins are participating equally in the process. In case of an educated Brahmin, secular values may be expressed in his 'not wearing a **Janai** (sacred thread), or drinking liquor', but this does not mean that older Brahmins have adopted these secular practices.

Regarding socic-cultural changes in the Damak Panchayat, the older higher Hindu castes still follow the traditional values. Their seemingly accommodating attitude towards the elements of secularization, such as, liquor drinking by their youths, is acceptance by them of the forces of social changes beyond their control, rather than a choice freely and willingly made. At the same time, the young educated Dhimals are not 'Sanskritizing' in the same sense, that the older Dhimals are doing, while almost all the Dhimals have adopted certain Nepalese national values, which are 'Sanskritic' in origin. The conscious educated revolutionary youths of Dhimal society, neither see themselves within the caste-hierarchy, nor unlike their elders, find any religious meaning in Hindu religious practices, such as, reading of the **Purana** or Satyanarayan-**Ko-Puja**. Their Values in this respect are similar to those of the educated Brahmin youths, who reject caste hierarchy and elements associated with it In this regard, non adoption of 'Sanskritic' value by the educated Dhimal youths contrasts with the practices of educated Camars, as Cohn notes 'leaders most actively attempting to make Camar behaviour accord more with the traditional behaviour of the higher castes' (1955 : 74).

Similar secular values shared by higher caste Hindus and Dhimal youths are a product of the 1950's Revolution and their receiving education now. Before 1950, Sanskritic education was open to and valued only by the Brahmins and friendship between the Brahmins and the Dhimals was based on the relation of tax-collector and tax-payer ties at ·best, and·creditor-debtor relationship at the worst. But at present, contact between the groups has been restored in a much friendlier atmosphere. Although the number of Dhimal children attending schools is still smaller than the Brahmin children, nonetheless, they learn together, play together and are being encultured into similar values together.

The present socio-cultural changes in Damak are almost revolutionary in nature. In a broad sense, the Pre-1950 political milieu in South Asian Sub-continent, generated by the independence of India and the nation-wide revolution against the Rana rules of Nepal, provided a background for these changes. As a result of these changes, the people who changed their previous patterns, either economic or socio-cultural, were well-rewarded for their efforts. In the Post-1950 national social-political milieu, different news media, such as radio Nepal, newspapers and magazines coming from the urban centres of India and Nepal, played a key-role in the national integration and its secularization process. Messages regarding the importance of education, the evils of the caste system, and so on, were constantly hammered into the people's mind. A new era of awareness, in terms of State's responsibility towards its own citizens spread among the masses. Before 1950, the State's relationship with the people was essentially limited to its dependence on land revenue collected from the villagers. The Post-1950 Government took active interest in the welfare of its people. The first priority was given to education and many schools were established to educate the people.

Furtheremore after 1960, when the Panchayat System was introduced, the opening of Nepal to outsiders brought not only new ideas of education and Government, but also affected the traditional economic system as well. Previously the village economy of Damak area tended to act in a relatively 'selfcontained' fashion (Bailey : Caste and Economic Frontier, 1964 : 230).

The later Government decision to participate in the international economy brought the villages in contact with market-economy. This brought further changes in the life-style of the people, while at the same time, it made the village economy vulnerable to the effects of national and inter-national political events and pressure. Under their cumulative impact, radical. changes are now taking place in Dhimal villages and the country as a whole.

Bailey's (1964) concept of a 'moving frontier' affords a useful perspective from which to view Post-1950 developments and the problems associated with it. In the Damak Panchayat and else where in Nepal, the State's call for and support for establishment of educational institutions and programmes enthusiastically accepted by the people as a means of achieving a higher standard of living Then with the State's support, the 'frontier of knowledge' in Post-1950 Dhimal villages was expanded considerably and concomitantly changes in values, aspirations, goals and perception also emerged.

In the same way, 'economic frontier' too moved from Pre-1950 into these villages. The Post-1950, rather after 1960, contact with the market-economy brought the remote villages closer to the outside world and clothes and shoes, radio and watches made in Japan and India and other European countries as well as from China were brought by the villagers. Kerosene oil produced thousands of miles away in the Persian Oil-fields made its headway into these villages. But at the sametime, the link with the market-economy impeded the growth and development of their traditional technical knowhow (e. g. making of **Khandi** cloth or shoes) and other resources and cottage industries. While it substantially altered the life-style of the people, it also made their life dependent upon outside sources and supplies, over which they had no effective control. The opening of **tarai** as a new 'economic frontier' accorded a small minority of the people a means of keeping up with increased household expenditure and further enable them to establish a reciprocal relationship in the functioning of the market economy. For the majority of the people, however, the relationship with the market-economy was only minor and did not benefit them ever in a marginal extent.

It is now observed that there is a growing trend to educate boys and girls among the Dhimals.

Changes are also found in dress, diet and standard of living. As regards diet, it is found that the Dhimals have begun consuming some urban foodstuffs like, biscuits, chocolates and sweets on some occasions. The old varieties of diets are being gradually replaced by the new ones. Formerly, the lunch and dinner included cooked rice, some kind of curry– mainly of fish, pulses with occasional liquor. Now use of green vegetables and kitchengarden products is increasing. Many utensils of aluminium and of stainless steel are used, replacing brasswares. They are also spending their money for buying hair-oil and other beauty-aids.

Some other elements of urban culture in the life of these people are also found in the use of modern medicine, their hobbies and cultural activities, and in adopting modern agricultural techniques and implements, to some extent. The most marked change in their attitude is the faith in family. There are four women who have done laproscopy operation, about a dozen are using birth-preventive pills. There are ten men who have also done vasectomy there by entering the modern era.

There are a few physicians in Damak and a Health Assistant in Tarabari. The compounder (Health Assistant) who is also a teacher of primary school, has helped a lot in treating several cases. Otherwise, this teacher treats them whenever called. With these new additions in their cultural activities, it has been seen that they are now discarding some of their own traditional festivals like, 'Sirjat Puja' and 'Dhang Dhange Mela', because of high economic burden. Their joint families are now breaking away, as well as the parental landed properties are also fragmenting into small holdings as Bailey saw in Orissa. These have created lack of means to spend for their festivals.

Thus the social, religious, political and economic life of the Dhimals have changed and are still changing. These changes have brought their social system within the orbit of a much wider society than before.

Whatever may be the changes they are undergoing, they have not undermined the traditional pattern of their social structure. The adjustments made in the contour of the society have been gradually absorbed, so as to fit with the changed pattern, without breaking up their traditional institutions.

Various counteracting forces under the impact of both urban culture and Sanskritization are so operating that there is gradual absorption of the new values in their social and cultural system. They have been able to retain their traditional culture even in this situation of close contact with other communities. Their traditional social institutions are not disintegrating, but with some strain they are adapting themselves with the organisational needs of the present time. Their value system is still maintained by their cultural consistency. They have reacted with their own pattern emotionally according to their value system for the stability of their culture. Traditions, institutions and values of their consistent cultural pattern have helped them to maintain their socio-cultural identity uptill now, of course, with certain adaptations and modifications.

□

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

The traditional picture of Dhimal Society is that of an agricultural (peasant) community, with patrilocal family–patterns, where males control all the social institutions and affairs outside the domestic limits. Land is traditionally held in three ways :

(i) By relatively big local landlords (land-owners), (ii) by middle and small classes of tenants as peasant, and (iii) by a few landowners who do not reside in the Dhimal villages, but participate as share-croppers and agricultural labourers. To this general composition, a further element has been added in the form of hill-people who have migrated into their villages. They have made a strong impact on their economic system and are forcing them by force and other temptations like offering high prices, to sell their lands, on which their livelihood depends. Thus they are being converted into a landless class of labourers.

Large–scale migration of the local population from the hill areas of the **tarai** to get lands here has aggravated the problem further. Encroachment of forest lands which was done as a natural corollary of population increase over the years and due to rush of these migrants, has begun to produce adverse effects on the local economy, as also it has upset the delicate ecological balance of the hills and forest-areas of the **tarai** in general and Jhapa district, in particular. As a result, soil erosion is occurring and having most adverse effect on agriculture. Availability of new cultivable lands in this area is very limited and the grazing lands for animal husbandry, which is a vital need for agricultural operations and domestic subsistence have become rare.

Land fragmentation is inherent in the social system of the Dhimals as well and when a property is divided among the sons in each] passing generation, the amount of land thus owned generally becomes very small in size and unfit for cultivation. The exploiting system of land tenure causes rampant rural indebtedness and they are ultimately compelled to sell out their lands for debt. These two socio-economic factors coupled with an overall shortage of land, have for many years, have driven quite a number of people into the state of 'near destitution' in the villages of Damak Panchayat.

Changes initiated from outside are gradually taking place here and these are found to have made quite an impact on the traditional structural patterns of the society. Most of the transformations have been occurring due to outside contact. This influence is likely to continue in the coming years. Land which is the backbone of their economy, is on decline now. The farmers of these villages solely depend on land to maintain themselves. It is closely related with the patrilocal character of these families. Any further change in this important economic factor of ownership would have a great impact on family patterns leading to their disintegration. If they lose their lands in this manner, their social position would be very insecure in future.

In regard to the directions in which changes may take place, the present study points to the following :—

In the first place, family patterns are likely to be transformed in the direction of more formal and equitable status for women, who are gradually beginning to abandon their traditional role limited to the domestic sphere. The channels being used to transcend the domestic roles are – education, business (selling of liquor and other items and improvement in handlooms as small-scale cottage industry). This will probably affect the distribution of authority within the traditional households in future. Thus patrilocality will begin to change in the direction of a more 'democratic' family structure.

There is another sphere in which change is likely. Inter-action models based on kinship and village Choumajhi connections will be transformed and community and kin-relationships will be of more individualised nature. The joint family is becoming more smaller and is breaking away from the system of traditional relationships. Relationships outside the family system follow other channels. This trend is already seen in religious spheres and festivals. Traditional festivals and worships are becoming shorter and more formalised. They are influenced by the Hindu migrants and accepting some of the features of their religion, as their own.

Thus the traditional integration of several structures (patri-local family structure, economy based on the use of land, kinship system of relations, a relatively monolithic closed animistic type of religion) into a coherent whole at the village level, is being gradually broken and substituted by a more mobile and less localised one.

The horizon of marriage concept is widening with the occurrence of inter-caste/community marriages. Youths are now eager to perform even the national roles of political leadership and one of them has already secured a seat in the National Assembly of Rastriya Panchayat.

These trends are likely to continue and will in the long run transform the society's whole fabric of culture and social relations, moving more towards caste hierarchy and social stratification.

Thus, whatever changes-economic, social, religious and political have taken place, they have not undermined the traditional pattern of social structure of the Dhimal Society and the village net-work. The changes that have occurred due to outside contact and other socio-economic impacts in the Dhimal Society, have been gradually absorbed so as to fit with their own patterns, without breaking up the traditional social patterns completely. All these counter-acting forces under the impact of the Hindu culture and other political and religious factors, have been so operating, that there is gradual absorption of these new values in the social system of the Dhimals without causing any conflict or disintegration.

Though they have become more liberal now in their attitude towards food, cloth, by being exposed to the new and challenging and superior cultures, they have at the same time, strictly retained some of their slack moral and ethical beliefs. As a matter of fact, the East-West Mahendra Highway has opened up new vistas and brought new challenges to the mode of living and culture of the Dhimal Society.

These people are now awakening from the slumber of centuries and the time is not far off when they will be on par with other Nepali people in all spheres of life and activities, contributing their share as a united people to all-out national development. For this, however, the Government has to assist them to make a quicker progress, educationally and economically, to make them a more effective contributory force, as well as, a progressive contented commnnity.

They should not be kept apart as a backward ethnic group.

There is no special provision for scheduled tribes and castes in the constitution of Nepal. The present constitution of Nepal aims of at to create a society free from exploitation through class-coordination and decentralization of powers. The country has the diverse geographical. variations as a consequence all different groups of communities are not equally developed. The policy of His majesty's Government of Nepal has been to give facilities and economic aid to the people of the remote areas which are really under the darkness, backwardness because of physical isolation. Tremendous consciousness and development among all the communities of Nepal, after 1950's revolution has been attained in the field of education. Then gradually the means of transport and communication system was improved, not of course in many hilly regions of Nepal. As in the case of Damak due to the opening of East-west (Mahendra) highway in 1970, its outlook has been totally changing. Political consciousness, community's interest has swept their heart pertaining to their existance as a separate identity. The practice of democratic norms and its understanding, impact of land reform, education policy, civil code and other programme has brought changes explicitly into their conception of material, economic, socio-pplitical as well as to their aesthetic life.

National integration is the sole aim of His majesty's Government of Nepal. It does not like to give tribal categories constitutionally to its various dozens of ethnic groups although they have a lot of tribal characters in their elements of socio-cultural life. Tribal dissent enevitably endangers national integration and developmental process. Backward communities which are found in most parts of Nepal are aspiring to achieve social, economic and political goal pursuing various means of strategy. They are actively participating in Panchayat polity which has supposedly partyless character. It started in 1960, demanding more democratic norms.

The collective goals of various communities are through the medium of village, district and national panchayat in Nepal. The village groups, whatever their caste or communities affiliation, must maintain their cohesiveness, for alround developments of their villages. In this process then the active democratic participation of the people of various caste groups is very essential.

In Nepal, there are various population groups maintaining their own identity in a set of ecosystem interacting at different level of adjustment. There by giving rise to a degree of differentiation in the process of socio-cultural articulation. Again, this level of differentiation has given birth to a number of strata in their respective population structures in terms of ethnicity. One such stratum of population is Dhimal. Like Dhimal, many other ethnic groups and their population at different socio-economic and technological level are thriving with traditions in various demographic shape and size at different geographical zones of the kingdom since long. Their exposure to various level of country's projections are not proportionately counted. There by a sort of disparity in most of the sphere of country's developmental programme is very much missing. Of late some adequate provisions are being made not only by Government organization but also by public agencies and social institutions by adopting need base, target oriented scheme for their **all round** development, so that they can be tuned np along with the country's mainstream. For this, concept of regional planning is introduced in Nepal since 1972.

Nepal can be regarded as an extension of some of its elements of cultural core of an Indian subcontinent. For both these neigbouring and friendly countries witness exclusively similar form of extraordinary art, culture, religion and philosophy. Nepal's culture is a blending of the individual and impulses of Aryan and Mongoloid blood. The most distinctive feature of such culture is religious syncretism both Hinduism and Buddhism. This culture has been able to preserve its unique character because not once in its history has Nepal been subjected to foreign dominition.

Dhimal society slowly and steadily may lose its distinct identity of ethnic character and tune with main stream surpracing like many other underdeveloped communities transcend the castes and communities affiliations. Socialization and social interaction of the Dhimal people with Hindu Society is moulding them into a new group in Nepal.

Some provisions for reservation for different jobs and seats for them may be ascertained in His majesty's Government service and educational institution. But our attention should be fully concentrated on the integration of Dhimal people as an identified communities with the mainstream of national culture. Eventually we can hope that H M. G. of Nepal would make a full fledged planning and projects only after the thorough identification of such backward society in Nepal and their real psychological and socio-cultural problems, if they are to be really uplifted as contributers to the unification of Nepal.

POST SCRIPT

The Phenomenon of Cultural Patterns and Economic Change in Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal is wide spread since last two decades. Opening of the new high ways, establishments of hospitals, educational institutions, industries and ot her social reforms rehabilitation programmes, social justice and innovation in agricultural techniques and proceedures have greatly enhance the acceleration of developments and opening of modernity in every spheres of rural lives. Development of abrupt new settlements and townships has generated fresh demand for the markets. Traditional barter exchange system and Jajmani system have begun to modify in the forms of modern monetary exchange system. Migrants from all over the mountain regions and Assam, in search of land and homes for many people of diversed communities, have added a new impetus in the developments of the new townships along the frontiers of villages and high-ways. No matter what castes and conmunities are, there is a tremendous socio-economic changes in rural Societies across the whole of Kingdom. Time old traditions, customs, Values, usages, beliefs, food habits and dress Patterns and the whole of cultural Patterns and economic organisation are blending to adjust with the new situations. Blending of Hindu and Budhist Culture that played a pivotal role in uniting the Nepalse people is consistantly trying to reassort its new roles.

Cultural Patterns and Economic change is merely an example of a case study of Dhimal community with local Anthropoogical perspective. Such community like Dhimal are many in Nepal, undergoing same phenomenon of change. So the usefulness of the study would be of immense importance and it is a vital need for our purpose to record before they are altered.

Many such communities are reawekening from the time old slumber for national integration and development. There are many flowers but also many thorns and dust. Even then attempts to save and encourage them must be our main aim.

Lastly a word about Damak must be mentioned. Damak was mere a village panchayat in 1981 when I conducted my reserch work. To-day it is town Panchayat and its township and population is still fast increasing. Its village norms, values and characters are fading steadly. It has aptly manefested a new features of township, like many other villages lying over Mahendra highway over a period of this decade.

People have come and gone, big inaccessable forests have been deforested and programme for aforestation have begun, even the local indegenous rural economic set up and its mechanism has not yet explicitly bothered to alter in a sense of cultural development. The rural life, cultural manesfestations still has its distinctiveness, with little restraint.

Political system i.e Panchayat system has swept all over Nepal and its boundry of cross cultural phenomenon has vividly well founded. In a sense, cross cultural currents of socio-economic and political changes and rural life in Nepal though diverse has been uniquely undisturbed. Its time old Cultural Patterns and economic change is striving for a new innovation and adjustment.

Features of traditional family system, status and roles of the villagers way of life, by far, has been degenerating apperently and its main structural set up shows some signs of strain and restrain over the adaptability of the current Political and social system.

This study is a case not only with Nepal—a developing nation of the Sonth Asian sub-continent whether it may be of Indian context or of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh. Nepalese rural life and its characteristics cannot be ignored. They bear the same weightage on such systems. The factors of socio economic changes, Cohesion and depression have already been noticed with in the past few years Once isolated and freightened youths of Dhimal Community have begun to leave their natal homes in search of new jobs, bussiness, education and other oppertunities. This process of integration is vividly seen in their present currents of day to day life This is also the proof that every Nepalese Society is integrating with the main streams of national culture, there by cementing unity in diversity.

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Nepali Months and their English equivalent

1. Baisakh : April-May.
2. Jestha : May-June.
3. Ashar : June-July.
4. Srawan : July-August.
5, Bhadra : August-September.
6. Ashwin : Setpember-October.
7. Kartick : October-November.
8. Marga : November-December.
9. Poush : December-January.
10. Magh : January-February.
11. Falgun : February-March.
12. Chaitra : March-April.

GLOSSARY OF THE LOCAL TERMS USED

Annadevata	Grain God. Here grains are regarded as God as life savers.
Anguthi	Finger ring, usually made of silver among the Dhimals.
Adhiyan	Cultivation of land by others on half share-crop basis.
Aunshi	The last day of the dark half of the moon, luner conjunction.
Bhat	Cooked rice.
Boti	Earthen Pots.
Bhoto	Vest.
Bona	A black plain cloth with red or white stripes on the border, usually weaved by Dhimal women, who wear as sari.
Bohori	A kind of tree similar to banana tree.
Bejlaighelai	Bride's party.
Barati	Marriage procession,
Banchagele	Return of the bride for the first time, after marriage to her natal house,
Biswakarma	A community, blacksmith by caste.
Benami	Land having no registration certificate.
Bahun	Brahmin.
Bidi	Tobacco, used as local cigaretes.
Byre	The cowshed – a siting place for cows.
Baisak	Nepalese first month of the year.
Bena	Clothes.
Berang	River.
Bhumi Puja	Worship of the land.
Barang	Priest.

Budhathakur	God, worshiped by Dhimal and Limbu as Siva.
Birta	Large area of land given by land lords to their scychophants and near and dear.
Bhimsen	God, propitiated by Hindus.
Behari	Contributions or Subscriptions in terms of cash or material objects.
Bhith	A typology to land, in which only maize, jute millet and vegetables are grown.
Chyambrung	A musical instrument, a kind of drum.
Chirainto	A kind of leaf having bitter taste, used as antimalarial medicine.
Chuppi	Knife.
Hayamang	Fishing.
Cholo	Blouse, a woman's dress.
Chourasi Choumajhi	Like caste – council, who settles disputes and quarrels in the villages.
Chijurauka	Sprinkling of holy water on the image of the deity.
Chapagardini	A deity to whom midwife offer animal sacrifice for normal delivery of Dhimal baby.
Dhawa	Hand woven shawl.
Dok	Male.
Dharni	Female helpers during marriage ceremony.
Dufe	An axe.
Dau	Hook.
Daura	Double breasted shirt.
Dangarani	Midwife.
Dhami	Priestly class, usually old people, sometimes working as quack doctor.
Das	Ten
Dhyanko jhunti	The effigy of man.
Dharmapali	Performing charity.

Dharma	Religion.
Devata	God and Goddess.
Dhol	Drum, a musical instrument.
Deausi	A game played by villagers in group in the Devali, the festival of lights, when people visit every house of the well-to-do villagers to have some bread, sweet or cash.
Dhanhar	The type of land in which only rice and wheat is cultivated.
Dasain	National festival of Nepal which falls on tenth day of the bright half of the month of Ashwin (October). This festival is celebrated by worshiping Durga (Godess) and sacrificing of animals like goat, hen, pig, buffalo etc.
Das Dan	Gifts of ten kinds.
Dal	pulses cooked as curry.
Damaini	A female tailor.
Dhanabiki	Gift given to bride.
Fagu	Festival of colour which falls on the month of February–march.
Gora	Beer, wine or liquor.
Culthai	A thick cotton thread used to throw stone.
Gakali	Ear-rings, an ornament made of silver.
Gaoun	village,
Gotra	Clan.
Gova	Sytem of transplanting rice seedlings first by the head of family.
Gohoro	Lizard.
Gramdir	village deity.
Hari	Golden neckware.
Huka	Hubble bubble.
Hara	Purification after fourthday of the funeral rites.

Hara or Hakwali	one who can inherit the parental properties.
Hatipaka	Labourers exchange and hired.
Hat	A weekly market or fair.
Holy	Colourful festival of Hindus held in the month of February March.
Jarisona	song sung in sitting posture.
Jali	Fishing net.
Jheer	Long needle.
Jari	Compensation paid for marriage by abduction of another man's wife.
Jourage	Ancestral God.
Janai	Sacred thread which is wore by higher Hindu Castes.
Jiuni	Father's share for subsistance. A portion kept by the father to ensure his own maintenance and security in old age.
Khar	Bows.
Khaper	Lance.
Kachha	Uncooked.
Khukuri	Long knife. Nepalse national weapon.
Kodala	Spade.
Kachiya	Sythe.
Khopa	Weaving of hair in roll or knot.
Kashi	The holy city of Banaras, for Hindus in U. P., India.
Kharif	Summer crop.
Kumari	Virgin, unmarried girls.
Kanyadan	Bestowing daughter.
Langauti	Lion cloth.
Lokanti	A female friend of the bride who goes with her to groom's house for the first time immediately after marriage ritual.
Matuwali	Users of liquor or intoxicants.

Maharaj	A village deity.
Majhi	Village chief.
Masan	Cremetory or burial ground.
Maini	Female.
Mela	Fair.
Nadoi	Ear top.
Naubangi	First feeding of rice just before the final reaping of new harvest.
Nedu	Bag like container in which seeds for next year is stored.
Naga	Male cerpent worshiped by Hindus.
Nagini	Female cerpent worshiped by Hindus.
Ojha	A village shaman or quack doctor.
Ojhabhoka	Offering to spirits.
Okhali	Mortar made of wooden log for husking rice.
Parba	A festival celebrated in the month of October November.
Podo	Playing of musical instrument.
Pirango Kongi	Basket made of bambo.
Puwanlo	Large red beads of stone.
Petane	Other name of bona.
Pinda	Rolls made of boiled rice, offered to dead ones.
Pukha	Cooked food.
Purichaka	Heads of sacrificed animals.
Prasad	Consecrated food.
Purana	Holy texts.
Panchabali	Blood sacrifice of five different animals.
Raksi	wine.
Rits	Different kinds of marriage payments,
Rabi	spring crop.

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Ropai	Transplantation of seedlings of the rice.
Sul	Leaf of middle portion of banana plant.
Senkerauni	Tracing out of the geneaology of the bride and bridegroom.
Sarkini	Cobbler.
Sutusika	Name giving ceremony.
Satyanaran puja	Propitiation of God Bishnu and recitation : of holy text called Purana.
Siruwa	New Year's day.
Shakti	power–incarnate.
Sal	Shorea robustus.
Sim	mortar.
Sutusiki	Fallng of umbilical chord on seventh day after the delivery of the child.
Suruwal	Trouser.
Stalo	Plough.
Supari	Chestnut.
Sirijat	Festival celebrated in the month of June-July.
Sakodir	The house God.
Tupi	Cap.
Thoka	Hand bands made of silver.
Tola	Ward.
Tolaha	Male helpers in marriage ceremony.
Taruni	Young girl.
Urni	One string musical instrument.
Unchapaligyang	Rice feeding of child after three months of his birth.
Valaya	A kind of fruit.
Vala	Spear.
Venra	The first shaving of head of the child.
Vit	A kind of land where maize, jute and oil seeds is cultivated. Vit is also called as Bith.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Rishikeshab Raj Regmi was born in Palpa, Tansen, Nepal in 1945. He is an Anthropologist in His Majesty's Government, of Nepal, Ministry of Education and culture, Department of Archaeology, Kathmandu, Nepal since 1969. He did his B. Sc., from Bangabasi College, Calcutta in 1968 with Distinction in Anthropology. He completed M. Sc. Anthropology in 1975 from Karnatak University, Dharwar, India. His specialisation being on Socio-cultural Anthropology. He had taken special papers on Linguistic Anthropology and Anthropology of Indian civilization including Archaeology and Prehistory.

Later on, he was awarded Ph. D. degree from the University of Calcutta, India in 1984. His publication includes seven books on literature and one in Anthropology. Several of his research articles are published in various journals. He takes keen interest in applied Anthropology and Archaeology. He is married and has a daughter and a Son.

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